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The Town and The Trust
Harrison Patten

Fiction; American

THE TOWN AND THE TRUST



THE TOWN AND THE TRUST

A Novel

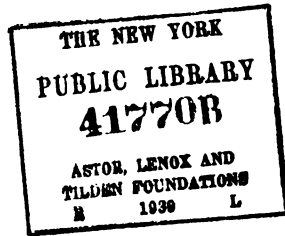
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HARRISON PATTEN

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THE TOWN AND THE TRUST

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The Town and The Trust

CHAPTER I

WAUKESA, the picturesque Michigan lakeport of twenty years ago, has spread out into a spruce modern city. Lake boats still make it with freight, and Chicago excursion steamers advertise it as an objective point; but the railroads now carry the bulk of traffic, both freight and passenger. Tall factories with taller chimneys send their black penants of smoke over the huge white sand-dunes and out across the glittering blue lake. These industries have brought money into the town, added streets of cottages, filled the schools to overflowing, and peopled the new cement walks with hurrying strangers.

The bobbing street-car with its team of rope-tailed mules is gone. Ten years ago the trolley came in to help increase the pace. And the new churches, new high school, new city hall, new hospital, new theater, new Federal building, new water-works, new fire-engine, new policemen in new brass buttons, new Carnegie library in course of construction, all speak of progress, prosperity, education.

The old-time resident is lost in a sea of new faces

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when he takes his Saturday-night stroll about the court-house square, with its brilliantly lighted stores and winking colored signs. In summer he finds band concerts in the city park, dances at the boat club and golf club, yacht races, excursions on the big lake, bathing, shady drives, excellent preaching in the churches, followed in the afternoon by clean-cut professional ball—no lack of recreation after the week's hurry and strain.

Waukesa has grown up normally and solidly. No sudden boom, no overproduction with its certain rebound into poverty. It has not played suburb to a monster city, so all its activities are well developed, and the life of each citizen is fuller, more significant both to himself and to the city than it could be in a mere residence town.

The railroad, too, has helped to maintain Waukesa in its independence, by charging high rates on passengers and low rates on freight; thus the factories and farmers ship material to market without penalty, but spend their earnings in their home city to the profit of Waukesa merchants, who in turn invest in home enterprises.

But the money to be made in interurban trolley lines—which are fast opening up the country and smoothing out the sharp distinction between countrymen and citymen—is drawing capitalists to invest, and the long isolation of Waukesa is seriously threatened. For several months now a new com-

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pany has been lobbying the city council to secure a franchise. The old trolley company whose cars run past the city hall, will have to renew its grant in October, and the new company proposes to take over their plant, and run through the city on their tracks, as well as operate the city traction system at a good profit. So the smaller shopkeepers are beginning to tremble for their trade when the cheaper transportation over the trolley shall draw their customers to other towns.

Columns of editorial wisdom, together with pages of special articles, have appeared in the rival newspapers. *The Beacon*, Postmaster King's paper, has lauded the new trolley company, and gravely suggested giving a bonus to assist the struggling company to get upon its feet. On the other hand, John Knox, in his *Michigan Post*, has more than hinted at Postmaster King's motives in backing the new company. Knox has insisted that the council compel the trolley company to plant its posts on each side of the street, and not in the middle; to pave the streets between tracks and a reasonable strip each side; to maintain arc lights at every street crossing; to pay a yearly rental for the use of the streets; and to submit their books for inspection as a basis for readjusting a passenger-fare within reason. This matter of control over the road is all the more important, says Knox, since the local trolley company will lose their franchise in the fall, and

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the city may easily give away the control of its streets to a great corporation with its headquarters subject to change, and no possibility of pinning it down to anything.

The Beacon has, of course, answered this argument as the raving of an impractical enthusiast, and has pointed out the possibilities of Waukesa as a lakeport with a good harbor, and all the surrounding towns pouring their citizens into Waukesa to do their trading, or to take boats for Chicago or the east, to say nothing of the freight possibilities on the cheap interlocking trolley roads. Postmaster King has skillfully played the winning features of the company, and then posed John Knox as the representative of his advertising merchants, the smaller fry, who fear for their precarious trade. Such men should go into clerkships, King says; they are not fitted to conduct business. Larger brained men, with imagination, will take their places, and Waukesa will grow and they will prosper with it, and the timorous ones will draw fifteen dollars a week as before, and they will need to worry only over how to retain their jobs.

All of which is true, in part, admits John Knox, in his next issue, but it does not bear upon the question. A trolley road is inevitable, says he; so much so that our city fathers may safely impose regulations upon it, and secure an adequate return for the use of our streets. No need to worry if this

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particular company fails to secure the franchise through their unwillingness to comply with our terms. Other trolley lines will come to us; for example, the road nearly completed to Orland, fifteen miles to the east.

And thus the fight grows. The city is divided on the issue. As Mason, King's crony and pet alderman, says, it amounts to a fight between Knox and King. Knox has no show at all, says he; King's a practical politician, knows what he wants and gets it. Else why would he be postmaster—and—well, he, Mason, ought to know, for King helped him into the council. And so firmly rooted is that goblin, "practical politics," in the minds of the citizens that even Knox's best friends are fain to admit that Knox certainly is not practical in the sense that King is. For King will do—well, exactly what he does is not apparent, but things have a habit of coming his way.

It must be admitted, too, that Knox is not so methodical in some phases of business as Postmaster King. For example, Knox retains in his office several wrecks whom King would drop without ceremony. Knox has a dim hope that they may brace up, and does his best to help the process, but at times he is punished for this foolish kindness. These irresponsible workmen make slips, and then the paper is delayed, misses the noon mail on Saturday, and must be distributed to the subscribers by

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hand. Ordinarily there is no reason why a tardiness of ten minutes in the arrival of the paper at the post office should cause their neglect till Monday by the carriers, but during this last unpleasantness between King and Knox their relations have become strained to breaking; so Knox has used every care to get his complete mailing list of newspapers inside the carrier's door at the post office before the stroke of twelve.

But one Friday forenoon Bordman, chief clerk and proofreader, had several drinks beyond his ability, and mangled the copy and the proofs. Mac, the foreman, was taken sick,—and “no bluff” as his wife telephoned to Knox from the nearest drugstore. So the office work and actual make-up of the paper both fell upon Knox. Frenchy, his friend the tramp printer—who had recently married a wealthy Waukesa widow during one of his butterfly periods; occasions when he relapsed into good clothes and French manners—was out of town with his wife, else he would have helped Knox for twenty-four or thirty-six hours on end. Henchman, the job printer up town, was buried under a big advertising contract, so he was out of the question. Therefore Smutty, the devil, was put at the proofs to make sense out of them on paper, and then to alter the type in the galleys to correspond.

“It's up to you, Smutty,” said Knox with a wry face, “you're the only man available. I've got to

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make up those first forms now. Can you stay by me to-night? I need all the other 'comps' at the cases to set up the late news."

"Yes, sir; say, cheer up! I can handle this—we won't go broke if a few words do look jarred some. You can jolly 'em up with an editorial about my originality in spelling. Our proof's lots cleaner than King's, anyway. And say, when Sam gets tired I can spell him on the rotary—he let me last week—um-hum, *sure!* I can feed her slick; it's fun, too."

"All right, get busy on those proofs! If you forget how a word looks, ask me."

"There's a dictionary," returned Smutty independently, and went at the long strips of galley-proof.

Out in the composing-room Knox and Shorty, his job-man, sponged yards of type in the galleys and slid the columns to place on the imposing stone. Shorty set the column-heads, and by six o'clock they had both forms corrected, locked and ready for Sam, the pressman. Smutty, too, had finished his galleys and waved the bunch of clean proofs in triumph at Knox.

"Good work, youngster!" said he. "Come to lunch with me at the Palace to-night, so we'll get back quick—you, too, Shorty." Knox lathered the stiff brush and went at his hands.

"Mother'll worry about me—I've got my wheel,

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I'll be here soon as you are—but you're good to ask me," returned Smutty.

"Yes, she'll feel easier—but you can use the quarter, I suppose?" Knox wrinsed one hand and fished up a coin from his trousers pocket.

"Thanks, I sure can!" Smutty grinned and dodged out the back door to his battered wheel.

"He's a rattlin' good kid, that," commented Shorty.

"Yes," agreed Knox, but his mind was on the work before him. Mechanically he glanced at the mirror to see if his face needed washing, but no spots appeared. The jaw was set with determination to get his papers into that noon mail to-morrow; and the brown eyes were keen and hard, at the thought of King, and his petty annoyances. But there was no such mean curl in his lip as King's mouth showed—a perpetual latent sneer. No, Knox would fight to a finish, give severe punishment and take it as it came, but all in the open.

After supper they all came back; and about eight o'clock Mac, the foreman, appeared in the composing-room.

"Go home and get well, Mac, everything's going fine," commanded Knox.

"I will not. I been in bed six mortal hours, an' I can't sleep another wink. My legs are some shaky, but I've got a ten-cent bottle of seltzer and a Scotch whisky at work, and I'll just sit here on

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a stool, and the lads can come to me. Shorty'n me'll fix the make-up *when* we git to it. You go back to the office and roast hell out of King and we'll set it up for ye."

"Is this straight, Mac? I can't afford to have you laid out, you know," asked Knox.

"Yes, I'll be all right. Have ye a match? See, I can smoke! I'm not so sick, now—if I begin to cave in, I'll send for you, Mr. Knox."

When Knox was gone, Mac leaned up against the nearest case rack and pressed his head in both hands to help him stand the spasm of pain. When it passed he glared at the compositors—ten of them—who had stopped work to stare at him in pity for his suffering and devotion to duty and to Knox.

"Get busy, there, *you!* Don't you know ye got to make the mail? What ye rubberin' at me for? Damn y', get busy!"

Still admiring they made the type rattle in the sticks as their speed increased, for Mac was right; they had to make the mail. They knew Mac's trouble, too; acute indigestion and steady confinement in the close office; and they respected his temper.

Smutty raced between the office and composing-room with copy, proofs, orders, till eleven o'clock, when Knox himself came back up the stairs to look things over and summon the men to a supper spread in the office below by two waiters from the restau-

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rant. Mac, seated in the low armed chair by his desk, had gone fast asleep and forgotten his misery.

"He's been asleep for an hour, sir," said Shorty to Knox. "We didn't need him, and he was in pain all evening, for all he wouldn't let on, so we let him sleep."

"Yes. Tell the men to come down quietly; we'll not disturb him." Knox glanced at the galleys filled with type for the next forms, and lifted his eyebrows; these men certainly had been keeping up a swift pace, and with Mac asleep!

When everybody was satisfied and the hot coffee had pushed back their falling eyelids, Knox suggested:

"It's half-past eleven, now. If we work till two o'clock, we can clean things up and still be in shape to-morrow. We're going to make it now, I see that. I've looked over the galleys upstairs, and as a printer I want to express my admiration for an office that can average over 1100 ems of brevier an hour, at night and with my miserable copy to set from, and with nine hours of day work behind. Gentlemen, I appreciate this assistance down to the ground. Be careful not to wake Mac, and we'll try to let him sleep till morning. I'll be with you upstairs in a few minutes and see you through till we quit."

Again they went at the cases, determined to keep

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the pace for a man who knew a good thing when he saw it.

At twelve Knox sent Smutty home to bed, sleepy but rebellious, for he longed to hold up his end with the other *men*. And then the next two hours tinkled swiftly away to the music of the type clicking in the metallic composing-sticks. Mac slept through it all.

When the men had gone, Knox took another cupful of coffee, and rolling up his shirt sleeves went at the make-up of the second forms. He hummed an air as he worked, but under his breath, of course, lest he wake Mac, who snored peacefully in his chair at the other end of the composing-room. Otherwise there was dead silence. The rolling presses below had long since come to rest. Knox could almost hear the footfall of the old gray rat who peeped at him from behind the case-rack. At length Knox paused to survey the page just finished, and looked at his watch; then he opened the back of the watch and gazed at the picture there. All the hard lines smoothed out of his face; he was living in the future with rosy visions before him.

Presently he felt another personality; Mac had opened his eyes and was taking in the pose—Knox, under the big argand lamp, almost in a trance and apparently fascinated by a picture in his watch. The explanation was clear. A smile of approval and understanding spread over Mac's face, and at

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this Knox blushed, though his two days' growth of beard masked it effectually.

"Well, how's the sick man?" asked Knox with an attempt at ease.

"The pain's gone, and I'm game to finish the make-up, which ye seem to've clean forgot, or did your watch stop? No, I'll not be guyin' ye. I've got a picture in my own watch—but what time is it?"

Knox looked again, to see. "Quarter after four," said he.

"Howly Mother! and ye let me sleep, and you workin'? I think watches is good tonic, but ye'll go to bed now, and Mac will finish where ye left off."

"It'll just unnerve me, to sleep now. I'll stay through and get my sleep Sunday," returned Knox.

"That's true, you will feel worse for sleep, this late, but I'll help ye finish the make-up, and we'll get a good start on the press-work, too."

So Mac and Knox worked side by side over the imposing stone while the dawn grew upon them till the yellow lamps sputtered out in disgust. Then they went to breakfast at the all-night restaurant.

CHAPTER II

SAM, the pressman, had come at half-past six and put the forms to bed in the big cylinder press, and locked them tight together; and when Knox and Mac came from breakfast he was cutting queer ovals and crazy patches out of a first impression of those forms and pasting the patches on a second impression to build it up. When he had fixed this made-up sheet on the press-cylinder, all the type would get the same pressure as the paper rolled upon it. Sam wore a big lump of paste on the back of his left hand, and cut and pasted with marvelous speed and accuracy; his eye detected an area of low pressure on the type, invisible to a mere typesetter.

"Good idea, that, to get an early start; we'll need to rush on the last forms," said Knox. His smile and tone conveyed to Sam his deep appreciation of his thoughtfulness in coming early on the mere chance of being needed. Then Knox went to his desk to work out his final editorials, and Mac took up his nervous task of getting all the latest news in type and in the forms ready for press by eleven o'clock.

Smutty was kept on the jump all morning. He took galley-proofs on the hand-roll press, filled the

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lamps, chased copy and proofs, distributed "takes" to the cases, set sub-heads, cut leads, was hustled, pushed, and damned in the rush, and kept his temper. He was the "kid" and he knew it.

Finally the last page-proof was corrected, Sam made ready, and then the big cylinder reeled off papers on the home-stretch, while all hands folded the damp sheets, and Knox stamped the addresses on them with the mailing machine.

Smutty dumped his last armful of papers into the yellow gocart and swabbed his sweaty forehead with his shirt sleeve. Stowing a lighted cigarette in his hind-trousers pocket, he made a yellow streak to the post office. At half-minute intervals bare-armed typos gleaned papers from the mailing machine, rushed from the office, and played tail to Smutty's comet. Before the post office Smutty let the cart slide, grabbed the papers, shouldered the door open, and banged on the carriers' door, inside. Dinah, the post office clerk, was nearly swept off her feet. Smutty came through the office, dumped his load upon the floor, made three more trips, then propped back the door for the rest of the office-force. At the very end came John Knox.

"Did you make it, Smutty?" asked he.

"Sure thing, old man! Got a match?" Smutty dove anxiously into his rear pocket, and brought up the crumpled cigarette-stub.

Knox handed him one, and then looked at the

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clock. Dinah followed his glance, hesitated a moment, then went on gathering up papers. But the chief postal clerk, Joe Carter, stopped the thump-thump of stamping, looked over his shoulder, and suggested, "Don't waste time, Dinah, they won't go in this mail anyhow."

Ignoring Carter, Knox looked at her reassuringly, and she took another handful to distribute.

"Aw, what you givin' us? You ain't the main guy," sneered Smutty. But the comment was unfortunate, especially as Carter was now smarting under Knox's indifference, and his influence over Dinah, to whom Carter was engaged. Immediately it occurred to Carter that a bunch of letters was ready for her to distribute. He received a curt reply, but she took the letters, shrugging her shoulders as an answer to Knox.

"How about this, Carter?" demanded Knox, aggressively. "We were on time."

"Thirty seconds late!" declared Carter with a front like Gibraltar.

"Apparently this is a hold-up," returned Knox.

Carter met his indignant gaze with an amused curl of the lip. "You're too late," said he. "Besides, I have my orders." And Carter resumed his stamping.

Knox turned to Dinah. "Will you please tell the Postmaster, Mr. Knox wants to see him." He

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watched Carter curiously while Dinah delivered the message.

The last compositor from Knox's office had come and gone. Knox gave Smutty a significant glance, and he reluctantly shuffled out, closing the door.

"Mr. King said to tell Mr. Knox," reported Dinah, "that there has already been too much irregularity in handling second-class matter; and in order to prevent congestion he must enforce the regulations. 'Hereafter,' he says, 'twelve o'clock means twelve o'clock.'"

"But I got them here on time. Will you tell him that?" persisted Knox.

Dinah went back, and presently James Livingstone King strode from his private office, followed by Dinah. "Carter!" demanded he, impatiently, "what time did we get the *Michigan Post*?"

"Past twelve, sir."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Knox, but you see how it is. We have regulations, and the inspector drops in now and then, and makes suggestions." King was apparently sincere and apologetic.

"Is such procedure customary, without notice? Granting we were thirty seconds late; thirty seconds is close work. May I ask who held the stopwatch? If I'm not mistaken, there comes your own issue of papers now, through the back way. It is convenient to be postmaster and editor at the same time!" Knox smiled.

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An ugly look came into King's eyes. In a second it passed. "That's not a bad inspiration; but this time you've guessed wrong," said he.

"Sample copies, I suppose," returned Knox incredulously, with a good-humored laugh. "You've made your point, however; hereafter you'll have no trouble. That promise should be sufficient to see me through this time."

"Impossible, Mr. Knox; they couldn't be distributed after this delay," said King, shortly.

Knox glanced at Joe Carter. Then his narrowed eyes swept slowly down over the sleek, tailored James Livingstone King, and he turned his back and left the office.

"Dinah," commanded the postmaster, "after this, when anything can be settled in the main office, remember that I'm out!"

Dinah bowed her head, and jerked letters into the boxes with ill-repressed violence, while King returned to his office. Carter had not intended to involve Dinah, and he knew that the reproof rankled. A forced silence ensued. Finally Carter ventured: "I didn't mean to have you called down, Dinah."

"But why did you hold that paper back?" she asked.

"King gave me my orders. It was worth my position," explained Carter.

"Why does he do that?" Dinah looked around at Carter curiously.

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"You know well enough," said he.

"I know, but what do *you* think about it?" she asked again.

"Well, *Michigan Post* fails of delivery; the *Beacon* never. That's easy, isn't it? Knox's subscribers will get tired and quit after a while. There's some smooth-looking fellows chasing King, too, and they all got in his office the other night. I couldn't hear enough of their talk to get much out of it. King was quiet as a mouse, but every now and then he'd grunt—you know that habit of his? Well, I imagine he held a stiff hand, for as they went out I heard one fellow say, 'You stand to win, anyway, King; you've got a dead drop on that *Michigan Post*'; and another said, 'Buy him out cheap when the deal goes through.' This hold-up didn't go through without giving him away, and now he's mad as a hornet—King, I mean. That's all."

"Why didn't you tell me?" snapped Dinah. "It's not right, anyhow. I ought to have known."

"I didn't want to mix you up in it. That's why I didn't tell you," said Carter smoothly.

"So that's what you've been keeping back from me all this time? I don't see why you should get nervous over it; I believe there's something else. Well—" Dinah waited for his answer.

A suspicious side-glance flashed from Carter's eyes. He caught himself, then his face relaxed

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automatically, and he was about to reply, but a customer tapped impatiently at the stamp-window, and engaged Carter's attention. When he was free, Dinah had thought out the problem to her own satisfaction, and complained, "Well, I don't see that you needed to queer me with King, anyway. I have enough trouble with him as it is."

"That isn't my fault, it's up to you to manage him; he'll walk a tight-rope for you, when he's stroked the right way. So long! I'm going to lunch." Carter took advantage of the vacant office to appropriate a kiss and hurried off, leaving Dinah in a mixture of moods, amorous and vexed; and curious as to Carter's real underhanded deal with King. For she knew very well that Carter had told her only a wee part of the truth about it.

Presently King called from the door of his inner office, "Miss Wright!"

"Yes, sir! Coming." Dinah moved slowly, collecting her wits and her assurance for the usual encounter with King.

"Sit down, Miss Wright; I wish to speak of some important matters."

She took the chair and looked at King as a bird looks at a snake. He continued, "I was very much displeased at the interest you showed in Mr. Knox this morning. He is a vigorous opponent of mine, and whether it is fair or not, I propose to have only loyal postal clerks in this office. It is a political

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job, my postmastership, and I have to play the game to keep it. I got it by playing the game, and I'm going to hold it the same way. Now you are in this game, too, Miss Wright, and I want you to succeed. You know I've raised your salary twice already. And if you only get onto the game right you'll soon run the outer office. But my efforts seem to be unappreciated. It certainly gets on my nerves to have a sour face around the office. You might give me a smile now and then, and I'm good for a box down town or in Detroit once in a while. Why do you persist in this straight-laced business? You are too pretty to spend your days glued to stamps and your nights in a stuffy room. Been to the theater lately?"

Dinah shook her head.

"I saw Carter with one of those fast high school girls the other night. She had him going."

Dinah set her teeth.

"What a little hand it is." King took her hand in his before she could draw away, and held her, looking into her eyes so that her will power failed, and she stared fixedly back at him, her bosom rising and falling as her heart beat faster and faster. "He's a faithful lover, the owner of that ring," commented King; "I wonder—will it scratch glass?"

"You devil!" burst from the tormented girl, but she had not the strength of will to resist King,

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as he walked over to the window with her and tried to trace Carter's initials in the fluted pane of glass with the diamond in Carter's engagement ring, still on Dinah's hand.

"See! It won't touch the glass," sneered King, his arm about her and his breath hot on her cheek. She turned to escape him, but he met her move and kissed her passionately full on the mouth, and held her in spite of her struggles and looked deep into her eyes and kissed her again slowly, drinking in her full beauty; and then as she realized the utter uselessness of fighting, she stood quiet, drawn to him in spite of herself. Then he passed a caressing hand over her bosom, and she felt a wild impulse rise within her.

A step sounded in the office. Carter had returned. King released her, and the instant his touch was gone and his eyes off from hers, Dinah's spirit came back with a rush. It was several seconds before Postmaster King realized that she had struck him a wicked blow in the mouth and that Carter's diamond would cut, if it was only paste.

Dinah had removed every trace of the incident when she returned from her lunch. Carter very naturally attributed her silence to pique, and tried furniture, knowing that Dinah cared for nothing else so much as the fitting up of a home, and that she wanted to marry him forthwith. But Dinah was not interested in furniture to-day. She came

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and stood by him and tried to scratch the stamp-window with her diamond and no scratch appeared, and he laughed good-naturedly. In the beginning, he had talked it all over with her, and she had agreed that his salary would not warrant a real diamond, and it had become a standing joke between them, but to-day his laugh grated on her.

"It's paste, like the giver," she sniffed.


"Well, didn't you suggest it?" he answered, surprised at her unreasonable criticism.

"Yes, of course; and you were glad to get off so easily. The price of a real diamond—you've spent it on me? On furniture?"

"While we're on this subject, let me ask; have you worked King to raise my salary yet?" demanded Carter.

"No. He tried to kiss me to-day. I've lost my stand-in now. If you were a real man, he'd be afraid of his life now."

"Lost your stand-in? A kiss? He *tried*? I'll bet he succeeded." Carter looked narrowly at Dinah till she colored at the thought of her recent experience. "Oh, hell! What's a kiss to a raise in salary? Brace up, girl, we'll get that raise quick now; you've got him where you want him. We'll make him furnish the flat. Don't get mad at me, dear; we'll work the old devil to a finish if you'll only play the game with me. We'll get him into a box on two counts. I've just about got him nailed



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myself on another deal. And he'll cough up proper, too, don't you worry. See, I'll take away that kiss myself——”

But Carter stopped just then to receive full in the face his engagement ring thrown at him by Dinah's indignant hand. And Postmaster King came from his office in time to take notice, and to form his puffed lips into a smile that said, “Aha! I've got you now, my beauty!” But he had missed the interesting part of the conversation, which really concerned him the most.

Dinah was thinking, “Play the game, *play* the game! They all wanted her to ‘play the game.’ What a hellish game it was!”

CHAPTER III

WHEN Knox reached his office Smutty was floating in a cloud of cigarette smoke, and sorting papers by streets upon the "folding-tables." The typos would need them for delivery when the clock struck one. The puffs of smoke came faster and whiter, but Smutty did not look up. Knox watched him with an approving smile, then went to his desk and wrote an order. "Here, Smutty, take the cart and bring back the papers. And I say, give this order to Carter."

Knox slipped off his coat, and began where Smutty had left off. As the men dropped in from dinner, Knox put them to work. "Thirty cents an hour, boys; we've got to cover the town this afternoon. It's asking a lot, I know, but there's a hold-up in the post office, and I wish you'd see me through."

The men took hold with a will.

Smutty dashed into the office: "King's out, and Carter won't give me the papers!"

"Mac!" called Knox to the foreman, "how many papers did we deliver at the post office?"

"Four hundred, sir."

"Is the first form thrown in yet?"

"No, sir."

"Then run off four hundred more." He walked to the sorting table, picked up a route, and left the office.

"Nothing stuck up about our boss," laughed Smutty.

Knox turned west across the tracks, and immediately found himself in the residence district. It was the first hot day in early April, and a warm breeze brought in a suggestion of summer from the country. Caretakers were raking the winter covering from the lawns, tearing straw coats from tender vines, and filling flower-beds with tulips and crocuses. The elms and maples arching the street were hazy with swelling buds. An ice wagon lumbered along, seeming less a stranger in a strange land. A red coat crossing the street, blocks away, fairly blazed in the clear new air, and John Knox responded to this appeal of nature. His heels clicked upon the cement walk; while every step carried him away from his careful business self to his happy old nature—the heritage of boyhood. Rolling the papers, he bent them, and shied them at the porches, an artistic precision learned in kilts. The action aroused boyish notions, and estimates outgrown long since and lost sight of. A trim girl drove her run-about just then to a horse-block near, and called out in a laughing, pleasant voice, "Mr. Knox, Mr. Knox!"

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As Knox looked up, the absurdity of his position came over him, but he dismissed the thought and hastened across the parking. She put out a gloved hand to him over the red wheel.

"You're a poor newsboy," said Miss Thornton. "You don't hawk your wares enough. Why, I can do better myself. "*Michigan Post!* Extra! Extra! Great calamity! Editor reduced to newsboy!" She laughed in mocking gayety.

"Kings sometimes unbend. E'en kings may jovial be," he quoted, laughing. "But there's no record that the kings were caught in the act."

"That's true," admitted Miss Thornton, "at least, I never caught Mr. King unbent—but is the devil dead, or has Smutty discharged you? Your attitude toward that boy is certainly unique. How you can maintain your dignity, and let him keep up that awful impertinence, is more than I can understand."

"Why, Smutty's a jewel," protested Knox. "Only this morning he did things for me, important, you know; now he's heir-apparent to the throne."

"Oh, fine! He ought to be in a book. Tell me about it, quick."

"H'm. Too subtle. You'd need to understand all that came before and after—a long story."

"Are you peddling that whole bunch?" She pointed to the papers.

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"Yes, I'm through on this street. Now I'm going over to Creston avenue."

"Why, that's blocks away! Here's my chance now, to do something philanthropic for a real waif. Get in, little boy."

Knox stepped into the runabout. "Now tell me Smutty's story," she commanded, as they drove away.

Knox looked at the reins.

"No, I won't be driven," said she. "Now tell the story."

"I'm afraid I exaggerated the humor," objected Knox.

"You didn't say it was humorous."

"Well, the importance, then. It was important, and Smutty did the right thing at the right time without a word from me. You wouldn't think it, but Smutty's a modest youth when it comes to a real situation."

"*That's* a good introduction. Proceed."

"Well, they held up the paper at the post office this noon. I tried to force it through while Smutty was there. Before a decision was made, I fired his acute ears back to the office. But he had heard enough to guess what would happen, and went to sorting the rest of the papers for distribution. When I caught him, the little imp never showed a sign that he'd done a clever thing; he held the dead forms, too, in case I needed extra papers run off—

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they usually throw the type back into the cases, you know, after the pressman is through with his run."

"Ah, I see; that's why you're delivering papers. What was the trouble at the post office?"

"The inspector has enforced a new ruling. All the papers must be in the post office before twelve, and we were late thirty seconds." Knox bit his lip, as the meanness of it all came home to him.

Miss Thornton drew the reins taut, and, with the skill of an expert, lifted the carriage over the railroad tracks. She was turning her next question over in her mind. "You don't imagine—" she began, "no, that isn't it. I wonder—" She paused again.

Knox never interrupted her gropings; they would soon lead her into the light. His mind swung lazily with the clatter of the horse's hoofs.

"What have you attacked this week?" she asked.

Knox came to with a start. The whole thing came before him like a flash. "Oh!" said he, "I see——"

"Yes?" Her voice was soft.

"That traction stuff. What an idiot I am. Why, of course! What'll they make by that. They must have bought up the *Beacon*; *Beacon* runs their write-up. I see. They expect to cinch the council, and are afraid of opposition. I told 'em I'd fight.

Fools! They think they've held me up till Monday. And the council votes Monday night."

"Have you anything in your paper?" asked she.

He turned to the editorial column; handed it to her, then took the horse. She read the paragraph, closed the paper without a comment, and reclaimed the lines. "Did they approach you?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What did they offer?"

"Why, the fellow put up a big talk—lump cash of a thousand dollars, ostensibly to be used up in advertising; all the transportation I want; and the post office, if the deal goes through."

"Why didn't you take it?" she asked seriously.

Knox was surprised. He never had deemed it possible that she could have two opinions where a matter of principle was at stake.

"I told the fellow," said he, "that after looking into the matter, I considered it contrary to the best interests of the community."

"Are the interests of the community the same as those of the *Michigan Post*?"

"Yes," said Knox.

"Was that all the fellow said?"

"No. He bragged about the power of his company; said they would close me up in a month if I opposed them! Whoa! Here's where I stop."

She pulled in the horse. "I'm afraid this matter is more serious than you think."

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"Would you have me dishonorable?" he asked.

A far-away smile lighted up her face. "How soon can you get those papers delivered?"

"All go to houses in these two blocks." Knox stepped out.

"Hurry, then; I'll drive slowly," she urged, and actually paced him, till the last *Michigan Post* was safe on the last porch. Then she took him in charge once more, and headed for home.

CHAPTER IV

As they stepped from the runabout upon the piazza and made their way through the deep porch to the door of Colonel Stanwood Thornton's home, Knox hesitated. "I ought to return to the office," said he.

"No, your conscience needs a vacation," and she laughed as she swung back the heavy door.

"But the papers are coming from the press, and I don't know that they are being distributed. Besides," his eyes wandered across the lawn over the low stone fence, and focused upon the black line of a freighter, way out upon the horizon of the blue lake.

"But you can get all that by 'phone. Now, own up; have you had any luncheon?"

"Smutty and the baker's lady make an unfair exchange—a paper for a pie. To-day I'm Smutty.

"Behold your baker's lady," said she, putting her hands akimbo upon her hips. "Now you'll just *have* to stay." The door swung open. "Father's away, and I'll have to eat alone, a thing I will *not* do. Men require a ridiculous lot of coaxing and inducements, but here's my *last*. I'll get dinner myself, and you'll help. A lark, a lark!" She took off her hat. "You know where the telephone is?"

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Well, when you've bossed that poor foreman enough, come out to the kitchen."

Knox stood helplessly in the middle of the hallway. "See here, Miss Thornton, in spite of all your cleverness, I'm upsetting some of your arrangements, and *look* at me, I'm a regular tramp."

"Look at the clock. We're both truants, aren't we? We're an hour late. Now hurry," said she, "I'm hungry as a bear," and she skipped away.

Later Knox pushed back the swinging door between the dining-room and the kitchen, and stopped involuntarily, hand on the door, to take in the domestic picture. Miss Thornton was charming in a ball-dress, but this kitchen make-up, the bared arms, house-wifely apron, the dab of flour on her chin, every item pleased him.

"Don't stand there like a—newsboy. Here, stir this milk; and don't let it burn, or I'll——" She held up a warning finger, and slid a two-foot spoon into his dazed hand. "In the sweat of thy brow, you know," she quoted.

"It does look like a hot job; but that quotation came when they got *out* of Eden. I'm just getting *in*."

"Stir it, stir it," sniffed she, tasting the milk. "The luck of the innocent. If I'd left it that long, it would have burned sure. That's not the way. You've put on power enough to run all your machines at the office. See; like that. Don't think

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of a thing but that milk, and I'll whip the cream for the gelatine. You'd fresco the whole kitchen if I left it to you."

"Yes," said Knox meekly, beginning to stir the milk, and giving it also a vigorous mental treatment.

Presently she took the helm, and slid the oysters in, stirring them the while. Then she turned off the gas, and moved the saucepan to a cooler place on the stove. Knox held his breath, for fear of spoiling the operation by jarring the atmosphere.

"There, *that's* out of danger. Make the ice-water, won't you, and don't knock over the milk in the ice-chest. The pick is on the side next the window."

He worked this process successfully, and triumphantly deposited the clinking pitcher upon the table.

"How many have you graduated in this course, anyway?" asked he. "It seems I have records to beat."

"You're getting j——" laughed she, then looked out the kitchen window at the barn as a carriage appeared. A delicate flush was on her cheeks, apparently from the stove.

"Well, I'm getting j——" quoted Knox, waiting for her to pronounce his sentence.

"Put on the dishes! My hair's a fright, I'll be back in a minute," she commanded, feeling her back

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hair with both hands, and settling stray hairpins home tight.

"Don't bother. Besides, it's only me. Why—" Knox stood puzzled.

"You'll be somebody sometime. I couldn't think of sitting down with you like this." She washed her hands, and began rolling down one sleeve. He took a last look at the disappearing arm. Then the other arm vanished, and he sighed.

"I won't be a minute. You must be simply ravenous," said she, and was gone.

Knox stepped into the dining-room and began setting the table. Colonel Thornton's voice came through the door: "Lay another cover, William, and get up that muscatel. Glad Sue was late. I suppose she'll be down soon? And don't *you* ever come into *my* dining-room with a dirty beard like that again, you hear?"

"Yes, sir." Knox obeyed, enjoying the joke and wishing that his properties fitted his lines.

A few moments after, Knox turned to admire Miss Thornton's fresh toilet, and then she advised, "You'll simply have to go out the back way, and come in at the front door. Here's your hat. Father's brought a friend, bother him! I'm going to shut the dining-room door and excuse myself to the guest. Dinner-getting is my rôle. Call at the front door, you know—just carelessly—then I'll insist upon your staying to dinner. I'll for-

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get you completely if you desert me now, with the enemy dead ahead."

"I didn't know——" he began, and then felt of his bristling beard.

"Well, use father's razor, if you must. I'm simply wild. What sort of nerves do you think I've got? Three men to dinner, no maid, and William off duty. If I can't find that steak, you'll have to get me one. You'll find a brush in father's room. Take the back stairs, and you can't miss it. They won't see you; they're busy in the front parlor. Don't forget now. Come back this way, and then go around and ring the front door-bell, and see *here!* If you go back to that office and leave me to that K— contractor, I won't forgive you ever." She waved the huge carving-knife in his direction.

"I won't," said Knox in mock terror, and prepared for a creakless ascent, only to tread on the broom and dislodge the carpet-sweeper, left in the back entry by the maid.

"William, be careful," called Miss Thornton for the edification of her parlor gallery, and then wondered how she was to explain William's absence when it came to serving dinner.

To his dismay, Knox discovered that Colonel Thornton wore a sixteen collar while his were fifteen. He made the cuffs do, however, and executed a ten-minute shave without damage. Polishing his shoes by a makeshift, which would not have pleased the

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Colonel, he took a last look at himself in the glass, withdrew a clean handkerchief from the Colonel's pile, in the sandalwood box, and, after a catlike descent by the carriage entrance, sauntered up the front steps and knocked.

Colonel Thornton bade him welcome, not too cordially, took his card, and waved him into the drawing-room to await Miss Thornton.

"Mr. Knox, to see you, Sue. You'll have to dispose of him in some way, with Mr.——" announced the Colonel through the kitchen door.

"Yes, I'll manage him, father." A little later she returned with Knox. "We were going for a drive, father, but Mr. Knox has consented to stay—and I knew he would be good company. You're both publishers you know, Mr. King; kindred interests, I suppose. It's so awkward for the hostess when the guests are not congenial. I remember one dinner: every person invited was not in love with the others. I—why, Mr. King! Of course, they were not in *our* crowd, exactly, but it was a little embarrassing, and funny—well, *our* little dinner will be free, and you can talk politics—that's not so. Oh, father, did you see the *Post*? I want that account of the Ingelow wedding; her gown was a dream! Hasn't it come? Your mail-carriers are so careless, Mr. King. The *other* paper? Oh, yes, I saw that; patent insides and sidewalk-bids, queer, the man forgot our *Post*. I'll jog his memory.

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Well, we might as well be served; father, you take Mr. Knox and we'll follow."

But Miss Thornton and King led. The table arranged itself, father and daughter, head and foot; a guest on either side. Thus far the two congenial guests had had opportunity to murmur only the commonplace greetings.

CHAPTER V

"HAVE you seen M'sieu Duval lately, Mr. King?" asked Knox, merely to break the ice, when they were seated. He had not the slightest idea as to where the conversation would take them.

"Occasionally; why?" answered King, trying to be civil, and wondering how Knox happened to be lunching at the Thorntons', this day, of all others, and with a dirty collar.

"He's reformed; or rather he has been reformed," Knox explained, and smiled at King's bewilderment.

"I don't see how that interests us," objected Colonel Thornton, coming to King's rescue.

"Oh, you haven't met M'sieu Duval, then? He interested everybody." Miss Thornton played her ace on Knox's lead, and looked to Knox for further details.

"That is true," said Knox. "Just now a widow is interested in him. She has two sons in college, and a daughter in high school. She reformed him, too—and she's Mrs. Duval now. I should say *Madame*, it's on her cards. And he—Frenchy—is learning to play golf, but he still smokes Perique."

"But how——" began King, feeling sure that Knox was merely playing with him.

"Ever see the 'Marquis' dressed?" asked Knox. "Give him three months' steady work in jumper, overalls, and brogans, and he blossoms. Best custom-made, with recent trimmings; and, you know, he has the grand manner, even on a one-legged stool at the case. He reaches for the capital M-box in a way to qualify for the guillotine."

"I fail to see how he interests us," persisted the Colonel, with a slight frown.

"Mr. Knox is merely telling Mr. King, father, of the matrimonial success of his comrade in business. What interests Mr. King surely interests us," continued Miss Thornton, and at this point King appropriated a smile from her. "M'sieu Duval is the gentleman of the variegated experiences you spoke of, isn't he, Mr. Knox?" she signaled Knox for help.

"Yes, that is, he did color them, I believe. Rubicund hero, roseate stories," admitted Knox, sincerely wishing the conversation might jump the track.

"And he put leaders in his shoes—I mean type, or sorts, or something like that, to keep the other compositors from getting them." Miss Thornton's eyes laughed at King and at the growing scowl of displeasure on her father's face. "Yes," she finished, with animation, "and the foreman had to pull him from under the imposing-stone after the engine had blown off the safety-valve; it nearly

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scared him to death, and he crawled in there for refuge, and stuck fast." She was trying the Colonel sadly, but King's only trouble lay in restraining his deep appreciation of her beauty.

"Really, Miss Thornton, your knowledge of detail is commendable. One might almost fancy you had served as—" King was not allowed to finish.

"As devil? Well, I believe I'd like it. I can make good pie now. Sorting out the hell——"

"Sue!" gasped the Colonel.

"I was going to say, the hell-box isn't half as bad as fancy bead-work. And I like the smell of ink, but to please father I've remained at home. It's a great sacrifice." Again she smiled at King, so that Knox gripped his silver knife dagger-wise.

"Do you think the electric road will get through this summer, Mr. King?" asked the Colonel, by way of diversion.

"Um—possibly—" demurred King, still feasting upon Miss Thornton.

"Why, they vote on it Monday night, don't they, Mr. King?" asked Miss Thornton, all interest in the new subject.

"I believe so; I forget exact dates easily. To whom do you refer?" returned King lightly.

"Now, Mr. King, you mustn't think you can play the innocent with us like that," laughed she. "It's just like Tom after he's taken the top off the cream: you couldn't find a drop on his whiskers

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with a lens. Your paper has an editorial, which of course you haven't ever seen, giving several excellent reasons why the road must be completed early, and urging prompt action by the council."

Knox looked a warning unseen by the others, and received a quick glance in return from Miss Thornton. King was slightly jarred at being classed with the cat, still he quickly recovered his poise.

"Why," said he, "I did tell Villiers to run something like that. You see, we really need, ah, better connection with the other towns, and the electric will bring considerable business to us."

"Yes, that is all right; but this politics tries my poor head. Are you going to the country club to-night, Mr. King?" suggested Miss Thornton.

"Certainly. I hope to meet you there," said King, eager to see more of her.

"When you get tired of bowling will you explain this road business to me? I can't get a clear idea of it from the papers. It's most confusing. Different papers say different things. I don't know which to believe." She looked at King appealingly.

"Shall be glad to render you any service," King wrapped himself in self-complacency.

Knox pondered the case; then his eyes brightened. He remained silent, however, while they discussed Brown's new dogs. Then the telephone bell rang repeatedly, and the Colonel half rose to answer, but Miss Thornton was before him. Closing

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the dining-room door on the way—an intuition—after a considerable stay she returned, seated herself and remarked, “It was Lucy.”

But when the opportunity for private speech came, she gave Knox the message: “Go to the office, quick; they need you. Something about the men or the payroll; I’m so sorry our picnic was interrupted.”

“You’ve been jolly good company, anyway,” declared Knox at the door. “I hope it won’t take Mr. King all evening to explain about the new trolley-road, at the club, because I want some time—” and he looked deep into her eyes.

“He’ll have till nine o’clock, and after that—” she smiled back at him.

“I’ll be there,” he answered, and left light of heart, as she intended; and she watched him till Brown’s hedge intervened, then shut the door. Her lips closed in a firm line that meant breakers for James Livingstone King.

CHAPTER VI

At the office Knox was relieved to find that the men were kept from drawing their pay merely by the absence of Bordman, the chief clerk, who had not yet recovered. He would, however, be on hand Monday, with a headache and with promises to reform. Knox would discharge him, for three minutes, then relent, as he always did, and the office would settle into its normal state of unrest; trying to ascertain why the folders for the Baptist church were not out, or who "pied the Salvation Army?"

So Knox paid off.

Then he sat down to reflect, heels on desk, and stogie in action. The Wheeling weed changed to ash, and fell upon his coat. Presently he reached for Bordman's ledger, and tumbled it down upon him, without rising. With pencil and blotter, he compared several accounts, made a calculation, referred once or twice to the calendar behind him; then called for Smutty. "How much ink on hand?" he asked.

Without comment Smutty consulted Sam, the pressman, and then reported, "Shy on *Post*-ink, good for three runs; job ink to last three months."

"Better try a new black, Mr. Knox: those boat-

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club programs offset fierce, smeared all over each other. Get a quick drier," advised Sam through the pressroom door.

"Hold on, Sam. How do we stand on paper?" called Knox.

"News? Oh, we'll go six weeks yet. Job-stock fair—" answered Sam, gradually edging in toward Knox's desk with evident interest in his motives for this inquiry. "Anything special, sir?"

"Look up the job-stock. Never mind—still, you might as well, too," suggested Knox in his hurry-up mood.

"All right, Mr. Knox: say, you're not quittin'? King's pressman, Maloney, said he wouldn't give much for my job." Sam shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Why?" asked Knox.

"Well, they seem to have the idea you can't last long."

"That's not new, there, is it?" Knox smiled.

"No, but this is a new deal," maintained Sam.

"What kind?"

"I couldn't get next to it, myself; he was mysterious about it. But I know a good place in Connorsville. You'll give me a square tip—the kids and Annie—you understand?" said Sam, apologetically.

"Trust the old man to give us a clean deal, Sam," put in Smutty.

"Will four weeks' notice be enough, Sam?" asked Knox.

"That's good enough for me. But you'll stay by us?" Sam looked dubiously at Knox.

"A year or two, barring vacations," admitted Knox, and grinned at Smutty.

"I knew it," and Sam went back to the great air-spring press, rolling on like the Wheel of Life, *chug-a-jug, click-clack, chug-a-jug, click-clack*, while a counter turned up the runfigures and the smell of ink and benzine hung over all.

"Say, governor, case Sam quits, put me on the rotary. I ain't got the make-up down fine, but I can bluff some, and a little cussin' from you'll put me wise to the rest." Smutty felt proud of his speech.

"Think Sam'll quit?" asked Knox.

"He might; he's not so stiff. Give him four schooners and he'll do wonderful things. There's the union, and Maloney; and King's back of Maloney, and God and us knows what's back of King! Say, we lose Monday night, old man. We're a week back on that editorial, and the heavy guys won't get time to read it in time to get their claws into the council. That company's sweetened King, and he's fixed the council. They're square, most of 'em; Monday night they'll do the Fourth of July act, patriots, like they tell in school, bringing in a

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car company with great business increase for the city, bless their hearts!"

"Who told you that, you parrot?" asked Knox, surprised.

"Haven't I ears and a brain?" protested Smutty.

"Ears; yes, a few. Were you in the waste-paper basket Tuesday?"

"No, but I was sweeping out behind Bordman's desk. Say, he's got a proper jag now," confessed Smutty, and looked for a squall.

"Poor devil, I suppose so. But you heard what Sturtevant said?"

"Yes, and I didn't want to rattle him. Say, some day I'm going to put you in a Sunday-school book, boss. You refused a thousand plunks."

"Well, keep it to yourself," advised Knox.

"Sure, I just wanted you to know."

"Oh, I see. Say, what's on to-morrow, Smutty?"

"Church with ma in the morning; then dinner, and Sunday-school; after that I've got to lick Scotty, personal reasons; then go to Christian Endeavor. Why?"

"Wonder if you could post two or three letters for me in Johnstown? I don't want them to go through King's office. Here's a ticket to a show there to-night. Train goes through here at six-fifteen, but you can't get back till Monday."

"That's easy, Mr. Knox: no need to go to Johnstown. I'll drop 'em in the mail-car; the six-fifteen

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stops, you know; and really, I can't disappoint Scotty."

Knox smiled with Smutty at his failure to think of this simple expedient, and then figured out orders for his gross needs for a year to come. At six the boy dashed for the train with the last letter still wet, and Knox breathed easier. They wouldn't shut him off from the big supplies now.

CHAPTER VII

Miss THORNTON awaited Postmaster King on the club-house verandah that same Saturday evening. Presently he came from his bowling and sat by her. "You're late," she scolded; "I've had to wait a century. Gave me time to think up a lot of questions. I'm anxious to know about that trolley; you'll be good and tell me about it, won't you? Father doesn't talk business with me, you know. Says it's no use; he has to repeat it all the next day when he does try to explain. He maintains business details won't stick to my mind. But you will be patient, and I know I can get it; you put things so clearly, too; there's no trouble in understanding." She smiled at him, and he took her bait, hook and all, and began:

"Some years back a company was formed to build a trolley-road. The council was hostile at the time, and refused the franchise, but Johnstown and other places gave them right of way, so the matter dropped for a while, but now it's resurrected. Our council is simply holding off now till the company sees them and makes it all right."

"You mean that our town council is waiting to be bribed?" asked Sue, wonderingly.

"Well, hardly that; there are other ways." King's voice was smooth.

"How?" She looked puzzled.

"Mr. A has a tip on the route, and buys up choice corner-lots; Mr. B secures a block of preferred stock in the company, and it draws dividends with surprising frequency; Mr. C gets a contract on construction for the road at a fancy price; he sublets that at the normal rate; Mr. D would *like* to run for County Superintendent of Schools, but lacks the money to buy the nomination. After the company secures its franchise, the nomination is his; and so on."

"Lovely; how simple. Father'll take his in corner-lots, I suppose?"

"Your father?" asked King, astonished.

"Yes; he's going to vote with the company, isn't he?" she countered.

"I hope so; but he won't receive anything for it. He's for the good of the community," maintained King.

"If those other patriots draw prizes, father ought to come in for one too—if he does his duty. I can use a corner-lot or two myself. He's got to play this game right," persisted Sue, looking at King from the corner of her eye.

"If you'll be real good, I'll tell you a snap," insinuated King.

"I'm always good," she laughed at him.

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"Get an option on Baker's corner. The road comes in there, and the car'll stop a long time before that corner. It's really a good investment. I hadn't enough money to carry it and my other business, or I'd have taken it myself," said King, truthfully enough. "You better have Bently, your lawyer, attend to it for you. It wouldn't do for me to appear in it, you know. People might not understand."


"I see. What a lot of things you editors find out. You have to be careful about telling things, don't you? I wonder if you ever tell the wrong people. It would be awkward, wouldn't it?" said Sue, innocently.

King laughed. "I pick my confidants with great care."

"Well, don't tell anybody about that corner," commanded she.

"Surely not."

Gradually she drew from him the story she wanted. How the town people were afraid of losing their customers to neighboring towns, and objected to the new trolley on that score. Others questioned the sincerity of the company, and suspected that the right of way through Waukesa, once granted, would be sold at a profit to the first real trolley road that happened along. Then she forced him to explain that her option on the corner-lot might after all prove worthless, if the road were not built through



that street. And at this admission she appeared properly crushed, but recovered sufficiently to ask why the *Michigan Post* so strongly opposed the traction company? Wouldn't they pay Mr. Knox enough, or wouldn't he take it? And did he actually believe what he said in to-night's editorial? Miss Thornton's tone was that of prosecutor, jury, and executioner of Knox all in one; sarcastic, condemning, cutting.

And King very complacently owned that there was something in each of her suggestions. No doubt Knox would appreciate financial assistance; he was having a rather hard time just now to meet his bills. Of course the community ought to get a decent payment for the use of its streets by the trolley company, as Knox maintained, but it was foolhardy to preach this to a council who were afraid the road wouldn't come through Waukesa at all, and were willing even to hold out inducements to the company.

Then she wished to know what profit would come to Knox by opposing the council and the traction company. Was he entirely right in his head? She appeared to be considering his fitness for the insanity hospital.

King seized upon this at once; he had heard that Knox's family were not free from lunacy, he said. She looked at him, and shivered at his meanness.

"Dear me, it's nine o'clock now, Mr. King." She

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read her tiny watch by the light from the window behind her.

"Time for one more dance, and then some cream?" said he, too dense to see that his welcome had gone.

"No, I have another engagement at nine, and I'm grateful for the education you've been giving me; you've been very patient. Good-night, Mr. King."

The ring of her voice was a trifle over-sweet. King wondered, simply wondered. Had he seen her escape from the club with Knox, he might have guessed, as well as wondered. All he could do was to think: "So Knox turned down Sturtevant and his bribe. He knows, then, that *I* took it. By George! I must cover that——"

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN at last the long afternoon of strain was over and Carter had pulled down the glass sash in the front stamp-window with a final vicious bang, Dinah slipped on her long cravenette, jabbed a dagger hat-pin through her head, and made for home. Carter looked after her with an evil smile. What did he care? A man was a fool to tie himself to one woman anyway, and live in a smelly outfit and feed hot milk to squalling babies, and maybe stay up all night with them, too, and then after it all, get called down by a frowsy wife for looking with favor upon some trim fresh miss. There was nothing in it. He could get all he wanted without any of these disagreeable fringes dangling about his neck; and Dinah could go to—well, to King.

Thus Carter dismissed her from his mind, settled his hat at the proper rake, rolled a cigarette, and sauntered toward the Palace restaurant. But Dinah lay still upon the window-seat in her room till long past dusk, her head throbbing and her face flushed. What was the matter with her? Couldn't she keep King at his distance? Would he really end by breaking down her last defense? She must live, somehow; the girl clerks received mean wages compared to hers, and she couldn't teach school, and

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now Carter was out of her life—what a poor excuse for a man he was! She couldn't go back home. Her father had all he could stand up to, and her mother would simply laugh at Postmaster King's attentions and suggest that Dinah keep him on edge and get her salary raised again, and "buy her poor mother a new dress and one of those lovely hats at Miss McGowan's millinery store, with all the ribbons on." And her father would finger his check-book nervously, and wonder if the school-board would drop him next spring and get in the superintendent of schools from Kingston, an especial favorite of his lady principal's? So Dinah knew she must fight it out alone. If Mr. King were only like John Knox. She wondered whether Knox would help her if he knew how King tormented her. Well, she couldn't expect it, for Knox called at the Thorntons', and she had seen Sue Thornton; and how could she, a postal clerk, compete with Alderman Thornton's daughter?

Her roommate came into the dark room humming "Silverheels," and turned on the electric light. She took up the latest magazine and settled herself in a rocker. And as Dinah felt the cheer of her presence she interrupted her reading to ask, "Have a good day?"

"Oh! how you startled me; I didn't know you were here. Why didn't you come down to supper? Had any? Sick, or just done up? Say, I was just

waiting for you to come. We're going to take in a sociable to-night. *We're* going, and I got Fred to ask Mr. Carter to bring you, too. I didn't tell *him*, but there's a Mr. Sturtevant who is crazy to meet you. Fred told him you were engaged, but he said he didn't care if you were *married*, he'd take a chance, just the same. He's surely got a case. Well, Mr. Carter had another engagement for this evening. He didn't state whether it included you or not; I judge *not*. Because you're here, and I saw him after supper with that insufferable peroxide high-school girl with the multitudinous rings. So won't you get into your duds and fascinate Mr. Sturtevant? Fred says he's no end of a swell. I'll get you something to eat, while you dress; and now you've simply *got* to come. You can wear my new silk waist. Fred never looks at what I have on. He says clothes are a nuisance, anyway, but he'll get over *that*; they all do."

Dinah rose to set about dressing, while her roommate, Martha, sped for the lunch. Alone once more, Dinah looked at herself in the glass to see if the worry of the day had left her in a presentable condition. Her face was slightly flushed, and her eyes bright; and the effect most attractive. She wondered who this Mr. Sturtevant was and what had possessed him, that he wished to meet her. Dinah was learning to distrust motives in everybody.

She ate the sandwiches and cake and preserves and

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drank the green tea, while Martha talked on, mostly of Sturtevant; he had an automobile, a red one with a horn that sang out through the night like an alpine horn. And maybe they'd all get a ride.

Dinah looked at Martha's reflection in the dresser glass and wondered if she'd ever grow up. Her mind seemed to be always on the pleasure of the moment. Well, Martha had real pleasure to look forward to; and now, she, Dinah, hadn't; but she couldn't keep on in the way Carter mapped out. No decent girl could. And anyway she didn't care, and she'd see this Mr. Sturtevant and use him to make Carter look sick. And if Mr. Sturtevant really was—well, she'd wait and see.

At the church Dinah forgot her troubles in the games and music; she loved music, and really could make a pianoforte talk in a simple Schubert-like manner. After a proper interval, in which he had minutely observed her features and carefully weighed each of Dinah's probable strengths and weaknesses, Mr. Sturtevant permitted Fred to introduce him to the girls, and then rapidly ingratiated himself with them. Dinah left the conversation to the others while she made out her estimate of Sturtevant. Martha talked for two girls, and Fred never minded the quantity or quality of the conversation provided he received his stipend of caresses after the crowd had gone and they were left to themselves, so Martha entertained Mr. Sturtevant till he was fairly stifled,

and glad to get Dinah to himself in the front seat of the automobile on the way home, and have relief from that eternal clatter.

This indeed was Martha's intention, as she confessed to Dinah in their room that night. "Of course, I just naturally talked him to death. Men hate it—Fred does—I keep quiet when I'm with him. So I knew if I bored him you'd shine by contrast; now, wasn't I good? And I knew you wanted time to find out whether you liked him or not, and *wasn't* the auto fine? I bumped about a foot when we went over that car-track, and do you think Mrs. Cordon's silver platter is solid? I thought it showed brass in spots. She makes dandy cake, doesn't she? but the fudges were simply bum!"

And as Dinah turned over to go to sleep she wondered where she had seen Mr. Sturtevant before. His voice sounded familiar, and he *was* nice.

A little later she was dreaming that she'd just married a red automobile with four yellow eyes.

CHAPTER IX

HAVE a pleasant time with the Postmaster?" asked Knox as they sauntered off from the club.

"Yes; he knows a lot about traction companies," Miss Thornton smiled.

"Tell all he knew?"

"Not quite. I'd like to know one thing, though. What has Mr. Sturtevant to do with this road?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I want to know."

"Secretary or Treasurer of the company, I believe." Knox began to see her drift.

"Did he try to do business with you?" she asked again.

"I have no proof. I'd better not say. It isn't that I don't trust you, but you might forget and make some mistake—don't you see?" he explained.

"Yes, I do see: he offered the thousand dollars' worth of advertising."

"I didn't say that," protested Knox.

"No, you didn't *say* it," she agreed.

"I know what you are thinking about, now; but it's not true," he objected. "Colonel Thornton has no part in this corruption, and thinks the road will benefit the town. So it will. The town must have its rights, however, and that's why I'm against the

granting of this franchise in its present form; as it stands, the town gets nothing. But your father is not selling himself like the other—politicians.”

“You are very generous; I’d like to believe you,” she said, hesitating.

“You must believe. Your father has nothing in common with Sturtevant.” Knox’s faith drew her closer to him.

“But I heard Mr. Sturtevant telling him that you were a hard man to do business with. He must know,” she added, still unconvinced.

“Not at all; Sturtevant offered me a lot of advertising—a straight business proposition. Your father knows only that I wouldn’t give Sturtevant the amount of advertising space in the paper that he wanted.” As Knox gave this plausible explanation Sue wondered if he really could believe it.

“Well, I’m glad you look at it that way,” she returned. “I’ve always been proud of my father.”

“So would I,” said Knox with conviction.

“Why does Mr. King keep that man Carter in the post office?” she asked, after a long silence.

“Civil service; King can’t discharge without cause, and anyway, Carter’s faithful to him. Of course, I’ll write to headquarters at Washington, and call attention to the hold-up on my paper, and the discrimination in favor of King’s paper. They’ll write a caustic letter to King and send me a copy. King will repeat the mistake when he pleases; and

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he has a special waste-basket for such letters. Prof. Cortis told me his mail was badly mutilated, and the girls in his school receive a large number of letters. Remittances were stolen, too. But suppose we drop King, and this miserable business." Knox's nerves were giving under the thirty-six-hour strain.

"I was just trying to help, you know." Sue's voice was soft as a caress.

"I didn't mean to be discourteous, but my brain has been on this subject till I am weary of it. You do help. This has been a great treat to me, to-day."

"Yes, you don't often serve dinner for Mr. King, then help eat it and enjoy his gracious company." She laughed at him.

"Have you ever read the fable of the bachelor who broke into the kitchen?" Knox was losing himself in the charm of her presence.

"Yes?" She looked at him inquiringly.

"Well, that's me," declared Knox, with conviction.

"You are the awkwardest; I can just see you stirring that milk. I thought you were going to putt, by the swing of the spoon, but you'd miss the cup by a foot at least."

"You ought to see Frenchy putt," said Knox, sliding into golf at her suggestion; "he kneels down on one knee facing the hole, then sights for the hole with his eye behind the ball all the time. His left elbow crooks way up, and he shoves the putter

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through with his right. One couldn't get into a more awkward pose, but he does great things to that ball."

"How does Frenchy stand the relief from work?" she asked.

"It goes hard. Sometimes he drops into the office, and installs himself on a case, with his old corn-cob pipe going, and swaying on his one-legged stool, trying to beat his record, he says. He never got up over 1,450 'ems' an hour; an 'em' is the printer's measure, you know, a capital M. He has a slight false motion—doesn't get his type by the head. The satisfaction in his eyes is good to see, at getting back, I mean; it's part of his life to set type, and hard for him to leave it."

"He likes you, doesn't he?" she suggested.

"Yes, he'll do almost anything for me, except—cut out his spree every two months," agreed Knox.

"Does Madame Duval know—about the spree?"

"She hardly suspects, poor woman. He has business across the lake about that time." Knox wondered at her continued interest in Frenchy.

"He belongs to the union, doesn't he?" she asked thoughtfully.

"Used to have a card, but he got his back up, I don't know just the trouble, and resigned. Why?"

"Then he might help in a pinch. Are you out of the game yet?"

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"I? No! It's just starting." Knox set his teeth.

"But they'll build the road; then what will you do?"

"Don't know, yet; they may not get that far. I may get a reconsideration."

"Oh—did you straighten out that trouble at the office this afternoon?" she asked, off on another trail.

"Yes; Mr. Bordman was not feeling very well, and we had to pay off without him. The men needed their cash, so Sam 'phoned for me."

"Can they really cut off your supplies and stop your paper coming out? You're such a small concern, why do they care? Can't they just buy the council. I'll quit bothering you with this in a minute. I know I'm selfish, but I can't keep it out of my head; don't you see?"

"Yes, I'm beginning to see; you are good to take an interest in what happens to me. Well, they may try to shut me up, but I'm fixed for some time to come. Still, it's unlikely. But they do prefer to manufacture public sentiment rather than coerce the council. My paper interferes. They need to complete a stretch of interurban road, and coming through here is very necessary, whether they build it themselves or sell the right of way to another company."

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"But what has the steam railway to do with it? There! that's my last, and then I'll leave you alone."

"Not if I know it!" protested Knox. "But the railroad runs parallel to the new trolley road, and will naturally try to buy up the right of way and keep it from being built, or else run the trolley as its own line."

"Oh, I see!" said she, and stood silent, deep in the problem.

"Now let's walk," suggested Knox. "That moon is great, bolstered up by those cotton clouds. Sometimes I fancy I'd like to follow the silver trail to the crest of the lake's horizon and step into the moon as it glides out of the lake into the sky. When I dreamed of that years ago I made the trip all right. The fishes and gulls told me I couldn't, and snapped at my feet; while the gulls——"

"Do gulls fly at night?" asked Sue.

"I don't know, but they shrieked in my ears, and flew in my face. They were only enchanted folk, I suppose, who had turned back: if you turn back, they say, you sink and the fish get you. After a thousand years you become a gull, and eat the fish out of spite. I never minded them at all, but picked my way over the wavelets. I had to hurry, too, because the moon was rising, and I didn't want it to rise without me. The wind at my back helped, and at last I was just touching the tops of the great

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black waves, silver where the moonrays struck. The lady in the moon set her face against the man's, and made him wait for me, so I really got aboard. Then I went behind the scenes in the moon, where the moonlight wouldn't hurt my eyes. Silly, isn't it?"

"Go on. Did she tell you that she was glad you'd come, and did you sit on the edge and let your legs hang over, you and she?"

He started. "And the man was jealous; you remember it? Your party, years ago? We played Jimmy King was the man in the moon come to get *you*."

"And you said you'd tip his old moon-boat over if he bothered," added Sue.

"And then he was afraid the people would see all the works on the other side if his moon tipped over."

"But he beat me after you'd gone. Think of Jimmy King beating *me*." She frowned.

"I was afraid of that—confound him. I'll fix him for that. Come on, dear, the trail is wide enough for two, now."

"Wasn't it silly—our old nursery play?" asked Sue, her tone showing anything but scorn.

"You wore two pigtails with brown ribbons, and your cheeks were red. I always wanted to play with you, too; but you preferred the girls." Knox was looking into her eyes, for a sign.

"No, I wanted you. You despised girls. You said so."

"Yet I lay awake nights thinking of you." He still watched for a sign.

Her face glowed. "Then I had my party," said she, avoiding the issue.

"Yes, and invited *me*. I was in heaven when that note came. Say, I've got it yet. Do you remember when we gave the others the slip, and sat on the stone fence under the lilacs to watch the moon rise? Just like that." Knox pointed out over the lake up the trail of the moonbeams.

"Of course! And *you* said the man had his wife with him in the moon, but I couldn't see her. You said *you* couldn't see her, either; and you made believe I had escaped from him, and we were going to elope. The man was angry, you said, and would GET us." She looked down.

"Then you put your arm about me," said Knox, "and declared he shouldn't. It was very dear, too. I said I'd go to him on the water, and throw him overboard. We played I'd gotten there, and we were sitting on the moon with our legs dangling—we were on the fence, dear, and I remember it was cold. Then——"

"You were horrid; you kissed me," Sue continued for him, without looking up, "but you said eloped people had to—there was no choice. I couldn't do anything; I knew it was true."

And then Knox finished: "Jimmy King came up behind us then, softly, so we didn't hear him till he

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claimed it was his next dance. And I whispered that he was the man in the moon come to get you, and he shouldn't. But you said it was cold, anyway, and silly, too; so you left me on the fence. I had it out with him on the way home, too."

"But it wasn't silly, and I didn't think so, either," said Sue. "I've got the fan you gave me that night, too. So you see——"

They were looking at each other—at the silver trail. He shook his fist at the man, but there was no woman. "Why, there's no woman in the moon to-night!" said he.

"How should there be?" Her voice was sweet and low.

"Of course!" His arm stole about her. "And you won't go back? I need you—you don't know how *much*."

"Yes, I do." A cloud suddenly obscured the frowning face of the man in the moon.

CHAPTER X

THE red-shaded lamp was turned low, and Sue sat by the library table, living over Saturday night with its new joy. A problem confronted Knox,—it was hers, too, now—the tangle and the man. She did not hear the front hall door open, and she thought only to surprise her father. Quickly hiding behind the curtains, she planned to pounce upon him when he was seated. But two men entered. Colonel Thornton turned up the light, and motioned Sturtevant to a chair.

“We can get the cars running in short order, now,” said Sturtevant.

“Yes, if it is desirable.” The Colonel carefully cut a cigar.

“How much do you figure the right of way is worth to you?” asked Sturtevant.

“I cannot set a figure; you know it; that is for a joint-board. You can’t compete with us on a straight suburban business, with all these short stops. Our elevated tracks, and that new track west of Collins street, enable us to give good service; and an hour saved is worth far more to our patrons than the ten cents difference in fare.” The Colonel smoked at his ease.

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The curtains moved slightly, although she quickly mastered her agitation. She was determined now to learn exactly what sort of a man her father really was.

"Well, it's your move," suggested Sturtevant.

"Pity Knox couldn't go in with us. I used to be conscientious like that myself—till my wife and Sue got so ragged. Poor place for a conscience—business."

"You're right there," agreed Sturtevant. "It seems Knox has an expensive conscience. I told him it was worth one thousand to us, but we couldn't see twelve hundred in it. He wanted me to give the city asphalt between tracks, a strip each side, and some lights, so it would appear decent, at least. But it's cost us too much already."

"You surprise me, Mr. Sturtevant. I supposed Mr. Knox was anything but a hypocrite; offensively honorable, I grant, but patriotic. There was no witness to your conversation with him? A foolish question, of course. I know you wouldn't take such a risk. So he merely wanted twelve hundred? Why didn't you give it to him—a trifle extra?" asked Colonel Thornton.

"I could get King's paper for a thousand, and King is a practical politician."

"Yes, but that's the very reason you wanted Mr. Knox. He has the faith of most good citizens," objected the Colonel.

"But I am informed that Knox is in with Mason, King's own pet alderman, with a scheme to hold up this franchise till they can get concessions for the city, as a blind, and solid construction contracts for themselves."

"That is hard to credit." The Colonel blew a thin line of smoke from his lips, and examined the cigar ash reflectively.

"I had it pretty straight; by the way, Colonel, that outside door must be open; there's a draught—I feel it—and the curtains are moving. I'm afraid you'll catch cold." Sturtevant smiled maliciously at the moving curtain, and especially at a shoe-tip peeping from below it.

"Mr. Hartel," announced William.

"I'll see him here," said the Colonel.

The visitor was left seated while Colonel Thornton and Sturtevant concluded their private arrangement on the way to the door. Sue was still a prisoner, shocked and sick. When her father returned, she listened to the report of Hartel, and to her father's comments and suggestions. The kind of parent she owned came home to her. First Knox was taken from her, then her father. Who was left? Surely this was a profitable Sunday evening service.

When Hartel had departed, the Colonel turned out the light, and Sue was free to leave her hiding-place. She sat a while in the dark thinking it all

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out; then went up to her room. The note hastily written to Knox was brief: "I shall be out next Tuesday when you call—and always: you, and Mason, and father, and Sturtevant know *why*. You were good in the moon. Why did you come back bad to destroy my faith?"

CHAPTER XI

POSTMASTER KING had just bowed the Reverend Dr. Stryker from his office after delighting that good man by a generous subscription to his project for a boys' gymnasium to be built as a lean-to behind the church. Postmaster King had also graciously consented to act as toastmaster at the banquet given to the Men's Club of the church by the official board. This was only fair, since King dressed in a Prince Albert every Sunday, and with other pompous sinners marked time up the main aisle of the church, while the organ played slow music; and then he decorously cast down his eyes into the offering-plate and counted the collection while the minister blessed it for its sacred use. So he really belonged at the head of the banquet.

As he was contemplating with satisfaction this tribute to his social position, Carter disturbed him.

"Have you a moment's leisure, sir?"

"I'm busy, but if you've anything of importance, let's have it."

"I want my salary raised, if you can manage it, sir."

King looked at him placidly, waiting to see what lay behind this, and asked: "On what grounds?"

"Dinah and I were planning to marry and have

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a home of our own, and you see, she'll have to stop work, and there'll be two of us—at the least—and I've done my work carefully and been faithful to your interests; so I'd like to have a raise, if you can get it for us."

"How much have you saved toward it?"

"Well, you see, it takes a good deal to go with a girl. She expects you to save and keep giving her a fine time, too, and so I haven't gotten ahead much, sir. There was a ring, too, you know, and I've had some debts left. I wasn't so straight before I tried to fix it up with Dinah to get married, and I had to clean them up."

"I see. That's a good ring you gave her."

"Cost over a hundred," admitted Carter.

"Will it scratch glass?" inquired King, with mild interest.

"Of course; why?"

"Oh, I simply wondered. Well, I'll take the matter under advisement. Dinah ought to make you a good wife. I wish you all happiness, I'm sure."

Now, Carter knew very well that King never returned to any project which he took under advisement. So he suggested as another factor in the game, "Mr. Sawtell was very much displeased by the deal your registered-letter clerk gave him. I shouldn't be surprised if he went after the authorities at Washington, to put in a competent postmaster. And you know what a pull he has."

King considered this point carefully while he cut a fresh cigar. He was well aware that Sawtell backed Carter for some reason, and he did not care to antagonize him; and at the same time he wished to see just how Sawtell really felt about things in general, before crediting the old gentleman with an ardent desire for Carter's promotion. "I'll talk it over with Sawtell," said King, but Carter saw through this evasion and tried another line of attack.

"You asked about Dinah's ring. I rather suspect you know more about that ring than you have any business to know. She told me about her experience with you this noon, and your disgraceful advances to her. I'd advise you to cut it out, *and* you may raise my salary, too. Do you suppose I want a woman tainted by your fine-cut tobacco, and pawed over by you? And I have another suggestion: the next time you make a deposit in the bank in Detroit, under the name of George Waters, don't forget to deposit half of it for me—*my* stage name is Harry C. Skinner; don't forget the "C," *nor* the cash. I have a cousin in Washington, an inspector in the post office department, and he's already got his eye on this office. So look out. And—you'd better raise my salary a couple of hundred. You can't do more without landing us both in the center of the stage. And that isn't good graft, the center. Behind the scenes is the place for me. I won't bother

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you any more now. Don't think too hard over it. Just get busy. I'm going back to work, and I'll receive a letter notifying me of a raise in salary next Friday, and it will be signed by you."

"You are a good prophet," agreed King. "I think something like that really will happen."

"Thanks." Carter bowed and left King to his thoughts, which were not entirely pleasant after being held up and robbed by his clerk in broad daylight.

CHAPTER XII

EARLY Tuesday morning Knox and Cornwall—the city attorney—considered ways and means in the closed back room of the *Michigan Post*. The gas light streamed past the door from the front of the office, giving a yellow secrecy to the meeting. Holderness and Jackson—city fathers—leaned back against the wall in their chairs.

“You’ve got the idea, Knox: a civic federation is needed. But it won’t do to advertise. It’s got to be done by personal work. Voters sign a petition to council. Four of us here—about four thousand voters. Get trusty men, and lay out the canvass.” Jackson lighted his cigar again.

“Knox doesn’t appear in this,” said Holderness. “He can help, of course, by the influence of the paper; but it will look less like a newspaper fight to some if we unload this canvass upon influential citizens who have nothing visible at stake. You and I and Cornwall had better keep out, Jackson. We can listen with better grace to a petition we haven’t pushed. But I wish you had better evidence, Knox. That idea of buying a newspaper to bunco us out of our streets is the *limit*. There’s no argument on that. Show a man it’s straight, and you’ve got him.”

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"Still, you know, Holderness, we've had that road given the franchise with no strings tied on. That's a good argument, too," returned Jackson.

"I know; I was asleep, or an idiot, to vote for it. But the bribery idea is what takes hold of a man," returned Holderness.

Smutty passed through the office, broom in one hand and a bitten apple in the other. "Come here," called Knox; then he shut the door after him. "Tell these gentlemen what happened last Tuesday, Smutty."

The boy looked them over: city attorney, two aldermen, back room, door shut. Then he asked: "Are you interested in trolley roads, too?"

"Of course," said Cornwall.

Knox nodded to Smutty: it was all right.

"How much did *you* offer him for the paper?" Smutty inclined the broom handle toward Knox. "Make it stiff now. Sturtevant fell down with a thousand."

The three stared.

"You have strange confidants, Mr. Knox," exclaimed Jackson.

"*He* didn't tell me; what you take him for? I *heard* Sturtevant offer it. Then I told Mr. Knox I knew, so I wouldn't feel guilty," said Smutty.

"That's better, Mr. Knox; much better," chuckled Holderness. "You work a typewriter, Mr. Knox?"

"Yes," said Knox.

"We aren't after a court of law or a jury, Knox; documentary evidence is what's wanted, and nobody'll have time to find out *all* about it. And here it is ready to hand," exclaimed Holderness gleefully. Then he swung the cover off the dusty machine, placed a chair before it for Knox, and advised: "Better make a carbon copy, save time. Now, you're making a statement in clear English," suggested he to Smutty, "to the effect that in your presence Mr. J. K. Sturtevant offered Mr. Knox of the *Michigan Post* a thousand dollars cash for the influence of his paper in behalf of the trolley road, giving place and date."

"Must I?" asked Smutty of Knox.

"Yes," said Knox.

"In that case, suppose *you* write it out for me to sign: I hate literature stunts."

"No, you don't," objected Cornwall. "It will sound like Knox if he writes it. Buck into it, youngster. You won't suffer. Got your eye on anything special we can get?"

"Mr. Knox wasn't bought, and I'm part of his outfit," objected Smutty.

"I know," returned Cornwall, "but that won't keep him from taking dinner with me, if I ask him."

"I guess it's all right, then. Ready, Mr. Knox?" Smutty chewed the apple reflectively, and gave them a pointed review of the scene in the office between Knox and Sturtevant, in which the fact stood out

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that Sturtevant proposed to buy King if he couldn't get Knox. Then Knox made copies, Smutty signed them, "John A. Finnerty," and you couldn't tell the signature from that of a man. Knox then signed it, and they took it to the notary in the front office. He stamped it, pocketed his quarter, and was none the wiser as to its import. Statements in the hands of a few were more effective than published matter, and King and the others couldn't get at them until the weight of evidence had taken hold of the voters, while the fact that King was strong for the trolley road, and had held up Knox's papers to keep back the adverse editorial comment, tallied exactly with this statement of Smutty's. Furthermore, Knox had not kept his patrons in the dark as to the delay in the post office on Saturday, and an editorial was already in type for next Saturday's issue, giving the facts and hinting that mail was not safe in the post office.

When they had gone, Knox looked at his mail, expecting only business. He took the letters in turn, noted each, and settled upon it. He brightened at the small envelope from Sue, opened it in a rush, then stood blankly trying to picture things without her. She said, Mason, Sturtevant and her father knew. *What?* King must be at the bottom of this—or Sturtevant. Once he had threatened to shut Knox up. But what a place to begin. To take the very heart out of him by estranging Sue.

CHAPTER XIII

COLONEL THORNTON on Tuesday evening declared: "But I didn't tell Sturtevant to bribe him; that was *their* deal."

"But you *did* push their franchise through the council, and you knew it was rotten." Sue was at white heat.

"You don't understand business, Sue."

"I understand *this* business."

"A good teacher helped," suggested the Colonel.

"Mr. King was very kind, if you refer to him. He knows a lot about trolley roads."

At the mention of King, Colonel Thornton stared. "Sue, I want you to understand that I'm simply part of this big system. The road has to get certain concessions. If I can't supply what's wanted, some other fellow will take my place. The money *I* got for mother and *you* came through the road. I got it square, too. You needn't worry your conscientious little head about anything now; just use what I give you. And say, daughter, go easy with that man, King. I bring him here, but no recommendation goes with it."

"You'd recommend Mr. Knox, perhaps, as a grade higher; two hundred dollars higher?"

"Did you believe Sturtevant, Sue?"

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"Didn't you?" she asked, hope coming back to her, as she looked at her father with wide-open eyes.

"I'm not sure; it's about even chances. His first story was straighter. Wonder what object he could have in telling me that Knox was crooked. I'm pretty sure that Sturtevant would have handed out that two hundred extra; *that* wouldn't stop a deal."

"Or put it in his own pocket and buy Mr. King instead," said Sue.

"Then it would cost him that two hundred dollars to tell me of the transaction. No, Sue, that doesn't explain his two stories to me."

"Dad, look me in the eye! Honest, now, have I a right to use your money?"

"Of course. How much do you want now?" Colonel Thornton reached for his check-book.

"Enough to get away from this business for a while; it sickens me. Can't you get out, or else treat the city square? I'd like to honor my father. What have I left?"

"I'll try, girl. That's like your mother. Remember, I'll get criticised whichever way I vote in the council. If I stand out for the concessions to the city which Knox advocates, I'll be thought of as trying to hold up the new trolley road so it can't compete with our suburban traffic."

"But you'll be square, dad? I don't care *what* they say."

"This public business isn't so easy. It's pretty

hard to vote at all without doing injury to somebody. A big man once said he tried to do the least evil in public office. I've certainly been in deals, Sue, but no cash or its equivalent has passed to me. I've rather forgotten you and mother these days, but I'll remember, *now*."

"Haven't we enough? What's the use of it? I'm not ragged now, and mother's gone, dad. Other men are spoiling their conscience because their girls are ragged—don't make them too bad. Leave some cash for them. And say, can't you keep Sturtevant from shutting up Mr. Knox? You said you didn't believe Mr. Knox was corrupt. If you're going to be good, that's a dandy place to start. See here, dad, you and I and mother want to get together again some of these days. What else is worth while?"

She stroked his gray hair, and he put out his hand for hers. "That was her way, Sue. Yes, we want to go to her. It isn't worth while, the other. You didn't care for King, daughter?"

"No—never."

"Knox?"

No answer. He pressed her hand in silence. "Sturtevant's a liar—you hear me, Sue? Sturtevant's a *liar*!"

"If I could only believe it!" She kissed him and went up to her room. For a long time she sat at the little writing desk trying to decide which held her

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allegiance, Knox or the Colonel. She loved her father. And Knox—had defended him! And just now the Colonel had given him violent preference over both King and Sturtevant. She wondered if they were not merely men, and playing their game of business as all other men played it? The game was sordid; everybody admitted that. And then, who was she to judge? Her father held to one line of action; Knox, to the opposite. Must she give over Knox merely because he saw things differently from her father? Well, she couldn't desert her father, especially in the face of possible disgrace and unpopularity. If Knox should win out, the council would certainly be open to the charge of bribery. Still, Knox had been maligned, so her father believed, and she had unjustly sent him his dismissal. She must give him a chance to explain, anyway; and she did want him. So she wrote a note recalling him and dropped it into the post office that very night.

CHAPTER XIV

"DEAR: 'The man in the moon came down too soon.' Sturtevant appears to be serving the *Man*—you know he threatened to get even with you years ago, when you dared the Silver Trail, and tipped his old moon down by the bow. I see it's still that way, and I rather expect to see our four feet dangling over. But I can't make them out at this distance. Sturtevant—for the *Man*—told a lot of stuff about you and Mason and father, and a trolley road and contracts. I heard it all. He made you out a scoundrel, and I was weak enough to credit it, so after Saturday night, you can understand why I wrote to you as I did. Forgive my lack of faith, and come and tell me that you are still *you*. The fish didn't get you before, dear, nor the shrieking gulls; you came straight over the trail to me. Don't turn back *now*, when I need you. Beware of the Man!

"SUE."

Postmaster King read the opened letter. The clock ticked solemnly in the stillness. A nervous shudder passed over King, and involuntarily he glanced about the office. She—this girl to whom he had unburdened himself—what did she know? Sturtevant? Mason? Thornton? The trolley!

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And this letter was to *Knox*! But *was* there a deal between Mason and Knox? Why should Sturtevant lie to Colonel Thornton? King knew Mason, knew him for a fox. And then as King recalled his confidences to Miss Thornton at the country club Saturday evening, he cursed himself for a blinded fool. "Anyway, he'll not get it, and she'll not stand for his not answering. Hello! this looks like his." King opened a letter from Knox, and read:

"There's some mistake. I didn't come back bad. There is no deal between me and the parties mentioned. You'll regret always if you don't let me square myself with you. I've a notion the *Man's* getting in his work. He was going to get even, you know. Let me call soon, and don't keep up this suspense; I can't stand it.

"JOHN."

"He'll have a chance to try," chuckled King, as he burned both letters. "And that means—well, it *may* mean that Mason has not thrown me over yet. I'll have to locate him to a certainty, because we need every alderman in this deal."

Four days, and no answer. Sue remembered the mishaps to the mail in the post office, and drove to Knox's office for back numbers of the *Michigan Post*. But the papers gave her no satisfaction.



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Possibly Mr. Knox could tell her? But, "Mr. Knox had left town," said Bordman.

"For the day?" she persisted.

"No, his stay was indefinite. Some business across the lake."

Then she drove home discouraged. Was the Man-in-the-Moon to triumph after all? Well, maybe it would be better this way. How could she keep up this alliance with Knox while he was using every effort to disgrace the party her father voted with in the council? She inclined to Knox's belief that the trolley road had bought the council, but she could not be sure of it. She tried to believe her father's statement, that he had gotten all his money honestly. And then she remembered the deep and suave diplomat—her father—who had talked with Sturtevant about the deal in railroads, while she hid behind the curtain in the library. And she wondered if her father *had* ever taken a bribe. Still she must stand by him, Knox or no Knox.

CHAPTER XV

HABBERMAN, the reporter for the *Mail*, ran across Knox in a help-yourself restaurant. Something, possibly the language used on the wall to describe the steaming-hot food in the copper drums, suggested to Habberman a reminiscence of Frenchy. "Saw the Count in a motor-boat with a warm crowd, heading across the lake. They hadn't shipped much water—yet," said he.

"When?" asked Knox.

"Last Friday. Probably they're all run in by this time," returned Habberman carelessly.

"Can I get over to-day?" asked Knox, suddenly.

"Across the lake? Sure; got business there?" Habberman looked at Knox curiously.

"Yes." Knox was staring past his hot meal, deep in thought.

"You'll need to hustle then; ten minutes yet before the *John Richmond* pulls out. Wish I'd known before; I'd—" said Habberman, but Knox had gone, and Habberman was held up by the watchful cashier for Knox's untouched meal.

Bordman, standing in the office doorway, received a hurried intimation that Knox would be gone across the lake for several days. He watched Knox sprint for the steamer; saw him spurt on the home

stretch, and saw the gang-plank slide back just after him. Then Bordman breathed a sigh of relief, and climbed his stool behind the ledger. On his part, Knox sat on a freight-box and watched the rhythmic drive of the engine, while his breath came back. Freight-handlers were stowing boxes snug for the trip. Presently they took his box, so he climbed the brass companionway to the main saloon, and sank into a deep arm-chair. There were few passengers, men. He looked them over without interest, and came back upon himself. Confound Frenchy! Why couldn't he take his spree at a more convenient season? What would Sue think of *him*? Running away like this just after his note, requesting a chance to explain? Still, he couldn't let Frenchy go to the dogs, and bring the dear woman, Madame Duval, into disgrace.

After a day of slumming in the big lake town he located Frenchy in a dingy house, and won past the unlaced guardian, up the dirty stairs to his room.

"You're a pretty proposition, dragging me across the lake in the middle of a fight, to clothe you and get you back to decency," said Knox to Frenchy, huddled in the cheap bed.

"It is King, that post office man," returned Frenchy, still dazed. "I *whip* him for you, M'sieu Knox, when we return; no, not by boat, with my

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sickness. The train—one parlor car for us—I pay you. Vouz avez une smoke? M'sieu Knox, what eyes she had! And her lips! No, that was the one in Hammond with the lips. So good of you, M'sieu Knox to—to—oh, yes—to come. W' you want now? Ain' got a cent."

"You're a beauty; where'd you pawn your outfit? Give me the tickets." Knox shook him to hold his attention.

"Tickets—tickets? He said he'd keep 'em safe—y' understand? Safe—keep 'em—that's it, safe."

"Yes, I understand," said Knox, and went out again to purchase clothing and call a cab.

Arrived at home next day, Frenchy, clad and repentant, told Madame Duval how good Mr. Knox had been to tend him in the last stages of La Grippe in a strange town. Mr. Knox had allowed his own business to go, too, said he. Madame Duval forthwith proposed to accompany Frenchy on the next trip; to which he assented—with reservation.

CHAPTER XVI

"A LADY called to see you while you were gone, Mr. Knox," said Smutty to Knox upon his return from his late trip after Frenchy. As Knox's head turned the other way, an interested grin broke through Smutty's solemn freckled face.

"Well, Bordman 'tended to it, didn't he? Want ad. or subscription matter, I suppose?" asked Knox innocently.

"She looked disappointed when he got her the papers she'd asked for; I think she wanted *you*," offered Smutty, watching Knox.

"Who was she?" Knox showed mild interest.

"Alderman Thornton's daughter."

"Leave any message?" asked Knox again, very suddenly.

"No." Smutty lingered to take in Knox's happy face, and then went back to his sweeping.

Knox turned to his mail. The day had grown brighter. He whistled as he slit the envelopes.

"Please run enclosed advertising matter in order indicated," read first letter. "Transportation, or cash payment, as preferred." A long time since the C. H. & P. road had thrown *him* anything.

A number of minor letters, then a shock: "I have to inform you that the position of Managing

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Editor of the *Michigan Post* was declared vacant at a recent meeting of the stockholders. Mr. Villiers, who holds a majority of the stock, was elected to the position, and you will give place to him beginning with this issue. Respectfully, A. Villiers."

"The *Man* again," said Knox. Then he turned to the 'phone. "Give me the Golf Club. Is Mr. Duval there? Say, Frenchy, got the machine there? Well, I'm in trouble, and I wish you'd come straight over here. Oh—all right—good bye."

"Villiers worked that beautifully. I really should have fixed those shares of Higson's. I knew Ford would sell out, but I'd no notion Higson would let go. It's a good thing that Villiers is new in the company, otherwise I wouldn't have a place left to stand on. Sturtevant's smooth; buys King, and persuades Villiers to buy up the *Post* stock, and turn me out. It costs Sturtevant nothing—Villiers' cash goes into it; *stays* in, too. Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea to enlarge the plant a little—do it with Villiers' cash, and watch him squirm. We can fight Sturtevant and King with their own fire. It's up to Frenchy, now." Knox went out to look over the job work, and see how the "comps" were getting on. Then he planned for the week the editorials and heavy articles with his city editor.

"In trouble, eh? That King again?" asked Frenchy, when Knox had him alone in the back room.

"Pretty close to it. Villiers—his city editor—has bought up a majority of our stock, and elected himself to my position. They're going to fight me with my own money."

"Sacar-r-re! And *me*? What do I do? No good to beat King. He won't sell stock—non! You get out: what else you do? Nothing! I see! Ah-h, you—me—we start another paper—buy that Dutch sheet down street. All your advertisers go along with you—all your jobs. Pretty soon *you* run Villiers out. He pay no dividend; no, not his men, not his own salary. He sell cheap; you own all the stock then. You—me—we run both papers. I'm Democrat; catch the Democrats. Your *Post*—Republican—catch *them*. Voila, les editeurs!"

"That's good of you, Frenchy. But I think we can do better. Can you put in two thousand?"

"Oui, but he not sell," objected Frenchy.

"Of course not; he won't now, and later we don't care what he does. There are twenty shares of unissued stock at one hundred a share. Villiers didn't know about them. Take my note for a year, and I'll issue them to myself, and pay the money into the treasury; and then hold another meeting, with myself as a majority of the stockholders, depose Villiers, and re-elect myself to my present position with a slight increase in salary, as an expression of the full appreciation of the stockholders for my services."

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"Yes, M'sieu Knox, I get it. First, I see my wife. She knows you, no trouble. Good investment. But I regret not to help. You very good to me, not built like you; can't stand all the time one thing, therefore I go on spree. But you let *me* help yet? This not help; this just a good investment. M'sieu Knox, we do up that man King yet; oui, I see it. My caddie's waiting; also I must lick that young Hebel; he offer me one stroke a hole. *I* fix him. Madame I see at lunch; she come to the club; you have the cash this afternoon." Frenchy rose, and twirled his mustache.

"We'll clean them up, thanks to you, Frenchy. And say, when there's something I can do, I'll be there."

"Already you have been. I see you about three o'clock—here." Frenchy's car puffed down the brick pavement, and Knox went back to think things out.

CHAPTER XVII

"SMUTTY!" called Knox.

"Yessir?"

"Go get a hair-cut; here's a quarter."

"What style? Say, I'll call 'em up and have it delivered."

"Trot along, now. Don't get it shingled; and look here: show up after dinner in your Sunday suit." Knox turned to his work.

"Yessir. Say, this don't mean I'm fired? Sam says King said Villiers had scooped you, and you're out of it."

"It's true. He tried to, but I'm not out yet. Do you want to stay with me?" asked Knox.

"Yes—I'd quit if he took it. But ma needs the cash."

"Well, cheer up, you're good for a job. Hustle now. I want you clean and sweet this afternoon."

"Sure!" Smutty slid into his jacket and left at a run.

So King was spreading the news. If Frenchy failed to bring the cash, Villiers would get out that week's *Post*. It would be a great change. But why not allow Villiers to show his hand? If he put his editorials out in type, it would be easier to smash

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him. Frenchy would probably get the cash, but if he failed—the twenty shares were still his to issue when he got the money. Villiers would hardly ruin his own money by mismanaging the *Post*.


Knox's thoughts were interrupted by Villiers himself: "I want to get into the work at once, Mr. Knox. For your own interest you'll help me with the loose ends I've got to check up. A good deal of mail for the *Post* will be addressed to you. I take it that you'll see to it that I get it. Of course, you have a private drawer at the post office, so I'll not see your letters."

"Nothing of value comes by that post office, anyhow, Mr. Villiers. Of course I'll do what I can to assist you in mastering all the details of my business. I suggest that you retain the office force; at least until you can replace it without impairing its efficiency. It will take me a while to arrange my private papers and effects. Come in this afternoon. I want this morning for myself. Good-day, sir."

Villiers was dismissed, wondering how it all happened.

"I haven't drawn my salary for some months," thought Knox. "How's my private account with the firm?" asked he of Bordman.

"Four hundred fifty, seventy-five, in your favor," said the clerk.



"Make out a check to me for the total. What outstanding bills have we?"

"Three hundred eighty odd dollars."

"Our bank balance?" asked Knox again.

"Five hundred odd."

"Bills due us?" Knox was footing up the items.

"Two hundred, besides subscriptions."

"Go out on the street, and collect all you can. Pay the men for the next two weeks, including yourself. Then pay bills as far as it goes. Settle with enough of our creditors to overdraw us at the bank; pay the easy ones first. How's our restaurant credit?"

"About a hundred ahead," said Bordman.

"Split it up among the men. Give orders as usual, of course. Any theater passes? Well, give everybody on the force a show at it. I'll take the transportation, myself. Suppose you ask Haslup to tend the office while we're gone."

Knox drew his salary from the bank, and deposited it in the National across the street, to his private account.

"Got a hundred and fifty of it. He'll have a time collecting the rest under two months," puffed Bordman, heated by the hurried gathering of small accounts along the business street. "You'd better help me, Mr. Knox, if we're to pay the men, and mail checks for those bills before lunch. Villiers comes in after."

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"All right. Let's get busy," agreed Knox.


They gave each man his wage-envelope as he left for lunch. In the envelope was a pass to a show, worth three dollars, and a restaurant order. Each one stepped outside the door to examine his pay. Rumors of Knox's trouble with Villiers had kept them uneasy all morning. Now they returned.

"We appreciate this down to the ground, Mr. Knox. You've fixed it so we can live to get another job, in case he fires us." The advertising job compositor, "Shorty," in his silk hat and finished attire, well expressed their sentiment. Each shook Mr. Knox by the hand.

"Don't change your job this week, men," advised Knox. "I can't say any more now. Remember, I own nearly half the stock of the *Post*. I'm not selling, either. Don't sulk. Help Villiers all you can, and that will help me. This is straight business, too; not resignation to fate. I haven't played all my cards, and we'll do a lot of business together yet."

"I certainly hope so, Mr. Knox," said Mac, the foreman, and the rest nodded assent, but scowled at Villiers as that oily gentleman entered the office.

"Yes, I've been busy all morning, cleaning up loose ends for you, Mr. Villiers," said Knox pleasantly. "Oh, Smutty, I wish you'd deliver this note for me. You know the address? Yes? All right.



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It goes from your hands direct to the party it's addressed to. No third person gets it; you understand?"

"Yessir."

"And you may answer any questions asked you. Remember, you mustn't fail me."

"You know I won't," said Smutty, glancing from the address on the envelope up into Knox's face.

"That's why you're sent." Knox turned from the boy to Villiers:

"Now, Mr. Villiers, suppose we postpone our talk till I get some lunch? I have a long afternoon before me," suggested Knox.

"Get your dinner, by all means. What time will you return?"

"Suppose you come and have a bite with me?"

"I've had mine," objected Villiers weakly, but yielded to the attraction of a meal costing him nothing.

Knox's order surprised the waiter, who tore up the kitchen to supply two six-course dinners at noon. Villiers had time to recover from his astonishment while Knox used the telephone:—"Say, Bordman, when Frenchy calls for me about three o'clock, tell him to go over to my rooms and wait for me—even if I don't show up till six. And Smutty is to come direct to me here—I'm at Courtland's restaurant. If he finds me gone, he's to

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come to my rooms. Good-bye. Hello, central. Yes, please, the Golf Club—I forget the number. Yes, Mr. Duval. Is that you, Frenchy? How'd you come out? Eh—? Oh, what the d——, beg pardon—do I care about your licking young Hebel? The deal? Oh, your wife hasn't come out? Say, come to my rooms after you see her. Villiers has assumed control—eh?" But central had shut Frenchy off, for expressing his convictions through the 'phone.

The last course was served about a quarter of three.

"I've got to run up to my rooms for a minute," said Knox, "before we get down to business. You finish, and I'll settle and try to be at the office as soon as you are. If I'm a little late, finish up with that." He offered a cigar.

"Thanks. I've enjoyed your treat immensely. Coals of fire, eh?" suggested Villiers.

"Not exactly. So long," smiled Knox, and as he left the place he explained to the bookkeeper, "This goes on our account—special item—" and passed in a slip for three-fifty. Villiers finished his coffee and blew smoke-rings at the mirror, not dreaming that he was entertaining Knox in a fairly good style.

CHAPTER XVIII

As Knox opened the door to his room, Smutty came close on his heels with a note. He tore open the envelope and read:

"You didn't get my first note. From yours I see that you sent me word, and you've been wondering why I didn't answer. We both used the mail. It's the *Man* again; I was afraid he'd come between, so I came to you at the office. I know where you went to now. Come this evening."

He looked at Smutty, who had thrown himself into a deep chair to rest. "Well?"

"Too bad you missed it. She filled me up." Smutty stroked his stomach.

"You acted like a pig, I suppose," quizzed Knox.

"Everything in sight. Say, did you ever try to say 'No' to her? I can't."

"No, I haven't, Smutty; I'm not sure I could, either. Is there anything else you didn't say to her besides 'No'?"

"Nothing I think of. She's onto this game, though. She was mad when she heard about Villiers; wanted to buy him out, and do it quick. I showed her it wouldn't work, and then she saw why."

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"You told her about Frenchy?"

"Yes; I couldn't tell the whole program, of course. But she knows," said Smutty.

"If she hadn't filled you up, I would—Hello, Frenchy!" called Knox to Duval as he appeared in the doorway. "Is it all right?"


"Yes; now you put it in, put the stocks out; and Villiers out, too. Come, we do it now. Permit me to inspect the beast."

"I want him to get his paper in type first. He'll put in some worry, too, and maybe some cash before the week is out. You certainly may witness his exit. Some day I'll thank you," Knox explained.

"Yes, I understand, only it needs no thanks. I do more if I know how."

"You're wanted at the 'phone, Mr. Knox," came from the floor below.

It was Sue's voice in the receiver: "I've got to leave for Washington to-night, early. No, I can't see you. Mother's sister—may not live to see me. Write to me at the Raleigh, but don't use our post office. Have you another address? To John Finnerty? Oh, he's the messenger you sent, Smutty? All right. How about Villiers? Is it true. I'm so glad Frenchy fixed it. I was worried. Now, be good. I ought to feel sad about Aunt Margaret, and I do; but Smutty made me very happy, just now, with his note and his frank explanations. Good-bye."



Knox hung up the receiver. It was easy to down the whole combination now. He called up the National Bank, "Can you take a deposit if I get there five minutes late?"

They answered, yes. So he pressed Frenchy and his machine into service, and with Smutty, having the time of his life, they sped to the bank.

While Knox was adding Madame Duval's check to his account, Smutty exclaimed, "Say, Frenchy, let's take the old man for a ride. He's tired."

"Oui, I thing so. You not care to go?" Frenchy's eyes laughed.

"I don't see just how they'll manage without me, and him gone, too. But I really must look after him. This car is a beaut. I haven't had a ride since ma sold ours," answered Smutty, maneuvering for an invitation to speed in the great red car. He longed to throw her levers, to make her fog-horn toot, and turn up his nose at the populace as they ran to cover, perchance to hide under the old hen's wing—if they happened to be chickens.

"You have one grande imagination, M'sieu Smutty."

"This was one car. Pete and I used to go for washing, and ma'd do it. Oh, we turned her wringer, and hung 'em out, and sprinkled 'em—no, not like the Chinees; I put a bicycle pump on a fruit-jar, and got the tinner to fix me a nozzle in the zinc top; it worked fine, but we had to choke Pete

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off, else he'd soak the duds till you couldn't iron 'em. It *was* fun to squirt it. Well, you know how it was. Pete died, and everything extra went to pay the bills. Some kids wanted the cart, and gave ma a dollar. We had her fixed fine; coasted the hills, steered with a wheel like yours, there. And we could brake her down any old hill. I went to work after he went."

"You keep still, M'sieu Smutty. We start the car, and run away with the editor. I thing so."

"All right; that's fixed. Now take me to the office. Mr. Villiers will be impatient." Knox dropped back into the comfortable seat. He forgot the office and Villiers, saw only a trail on the water, silver on the dancing waves. Looking down it the Man from the Moon glowered on Sue and him; after a long time the Man's face showed as that of Postmaster King. Knox recovered himself with a start; they were at the Golf Club, and King was standing on the carriage-landing. "You'll have time for golf now, Mr. Knox," said he, "Villiers will relieve you of considerable detail, I fancy."

"Have *you* a game on?" asked Knox.

"No, but you're rather out of form, aren't you?" with polite toleration.

"Perhaps; I'd like to get your team position, and this is a good time to do it," persisted Knox.

"For a man out of the game, you sustain your nerve well," insinuated King, clearly exulting in

the trick which had thrown Knox out of his editorship.

"I'm just getting into the game. Smutty! 'Phone Mr. Villiers that I'm unavoidably detained. Do you want to go 'round with me?" asked Knox.

"Permit me, M'sieu Knox," insisted Frenchy, "I carry your bag while you lick him. I have some new dimples, clicks, alligators—any ball you like. My driver is a peach. You try her?"

"Do I go?" asked Smutty, scowling at Frenchy for supplanting him in Knox's service.

"Sure," laughed Knox, "you chase the ball; that beats Frenchy's job; lost ball, lost hole. And don't you worry but I'll need all the holes I can squeeze; eh, Frenchy?"

King smiled easily at this rivalry between Knox's friends. "Of course I'll play 'round with you," said he. "Better get some spikes on your shoes; the green is slippery."

"Thanks, I've got my spike-shoes here; be out in a minute."

"I'm glad you brought me out here," added Knox to Frenchy in the locker-room. "Villiers may as well taste anxiety to start with, and I need to open out my lungs a bit."

"Told him you'd had trouble with an automobile, and you might be at the office some time tomorrow," panted Smutty, fresh from the 'phone.

"Yes, that's true," agreed Knox, "the machine

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ran the wrong way. I wish you'd rub up these clubs, Smutty. There's some emery in the bag; do you know how to put sights on?"

"I caddied here before *you* played golf, Mr. Knox."

"I see; it's a case of 'teach your grandmother?' All right, it's on you, Smutty, if we lose a ball;" and Knox began to whip the air with his driver.

At the tee, King led off sending his ball far out upon the clean-cut course straight between the two big elms that formed the hazard of the first hole. Knox tried to drive his ball above the tree tops, but failed to strike true and landed in long grass fifty yards off the course to the right.

"Hard luck," said King, and then smiled as Knox spoiled his second shot, too, and had to fish his ball out of a water-hole with the long reed pole kept there for that purpose.

"Couldn't win now, anyway, M'sieu Knox; he'll fall down on the next hole. Play steady," advised Frenchy.

And Smutty, in his turn, took a fall out of King's crack caddie:

"Gwan, he'll bring your duffer in six holes to the bad; King can't play golf. What do you know about the game, anyway, sonny?" Smutty's contempt for King's caddie was something fine to see.

Both got away well for the second hole, but Knox won it by a spectacular approach shot, much



to King's disgust. The rest of the eighteen holes was a pretty fight, each stroke played to win, and the game marred only by King's petty disregard of golf etiquette, for which he was roundly scored by Frenchy, who caught him in the act once, and forced him to yield the hole to Knox. Seventeen holes left them all even, so the next hole's play must decide the match, unless they tied on this one, too.

King hit a tree on his last drive, but Knox cleared the tree tops with good promise of winning, and was making for his ball when King let drive without warning, the ball striking Knox in the back of the head. Without a sound save the crack of the ball, he dropped. They carried him to the clubhouse, and succeeding in restoring him to consciousness: "The Man-in-the-Moon," he quoted, and then lay groaning, his hands at his head.

"Better get him home," said King. "Your machine, Frenchy."

"Yes; we will. Unfortunate, it is not the style to kill one who has such an accident, M'sieu King. You will find it convenient to take off your name from this club, and yourself—not? Then I prefer charges. Also I write to other clubs. You play no more golf." Here Frenchy lapsed into French, the better to characterize King. Then a swift blow from Frenchy's fist laid King on his back upon the hardwood floor, nobody caring whether he came to again or not. Frenchy nursed his bruised

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knuckles, as he remarked, "I don't know why I let him go so easy; maybe we keep still, Smutty. M'sieu Knox, he'll tell us. Come, we lift him."

Frenchy and Madame cared for Knox in their home, while Smutty and the doctor were silent. So every one supposed him away on business. Villiers retained Knox's name at the head of the editorial sheet and below it put forth editorials that stirred the community.

King carried his clubs and his grip when the 'bus bore him to town that night; but he tried to console himself with the thought that only Knox and Frenchy and boys saw, and he could deny evil intent; they hadn't heard his warning cry of "Fore!"

CHAPTER XIX

"MR. KNOX in?" asked Holderness, the square alderman.

"No; haven't seen him since Wednesday. You knew Mr. Villiers was running the paper, didn't you? Bought a majority of the shares and elected himself editor." Bordman looked the worse for his Sabbath debauch.

"Yes; no; I didn't know; glad you told me. I understand some things now; the editorials. Any idea where I'll find Mr. Knox?"

"No; he left no word." Bordman turned to his books; apparently it had not occurred to him that Knox might wish to see Holderness. But Smutty ran after the alderman and caught him outside the door. "I'll take Mr. Knox a note," he volunteered, "but I can't give his place away."

"Hiding, is he?" suggested Holderness.

"No, but he's not well, and his friends don't want him disturbed. Villiers would root him up in a minute if he could find him," protested Smutty.

"Sorry; I didn't know Knox indulged to that extent." Holderness seemed puzzled.

"Cut that out. He don't; he's not in the council."

"Oh, and I *am*. Guess I deserved that shot.

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You take him—but say, come over to my place while I write it. What sort of an editor is Villiers?”

“He’s King’s linotype machine. King’s running both papers now. Villiers used his cash in buying the stock. He found he’d drawn a minus bank account, so King’s had to finance the *Michigan Post*. Villiers goes crazy when we’re getting up the last form for press; chases back and forth between the ‘comps,’ mixes the ‘takes’ on the cases, and everybody gets rattled. Mac, the foreman, fired him back to the front office Saturday morning.”

“How do you know King’s helping him with money?” Holderness was all interest.

“Bordman saw him pass a roll to Villiers in a restaurant, Sunday,”

“That’s interesting, Smutty.”

“My name’s John Finnerty.” Smutty pointed to his creased long trousers.

“Pardon me, Mr. Finnerty. You’ve grown up since last we met.”

“I had to; I’m on a man’s job.” Smutty’s chest went up.

“Can you remember what I tell you?” asked Holderness, confidentially.

“Yes.”

“Now, get this straight: Thornton’s dropped Sturtevant and King and their trolley franchise.

He's with us now, and we're going to take back the right of way we gave to Sturtevant's road, and give it to the Westfield and Kingston Interurban. They'll have to run up this way to get across the state, and they'll meet us with concessions, and get busy on the track as soon as we let them through."

"That'll help *him* get well," exclaimed Smutty, in high glee.

"Is he really sick?"

"Is he? Been out of his head," snapped Smutty.

"What's the matter, typhoid?"

"Had an accident; got hit in the back of the head; laid him out. Keep this to yourself, Mr. Holderness," explained Smutty, impressively.

"Yes: somebody try to get rid of him? I bet that's it. Well, keep his secret. If mine gets away something will happen to you, Smutty." Holderness turned to go.

"If mine gets away from you, lots of things will happen to *you*—so long," and Smutty was off to Frenchy's to see Knox.

Smutty first handed Knox the letter postmarked "Washington, D. C.," and watched the haggard, unshaven face grow bright.

"DEAR:

"I'm settled in Washington for a while at least. I'm doing my best to keep the house bright, but

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Aunt Margaret's death has utterly broken Uncle Harry—he is her husband, you know—and my cousins, George and Helen; well, I try to keep them busy, so they'll forget a little. I'm simply wild to know how the 'deal' is coming on; and I'm almost afraid to trust you with it alone. I think father would go into hysterics if he saw that egotistical statement. By chance, I break into the councils of a nest of—really, I don't know just the right word to use here, because you are in it, and I certainly don't wish to stigmatize you, and yet you *are* in it, to a certain extent, unless you have since gotten out, and I don't believe you can do that, alone. I like to think that you need me to help. Say, dear, I do hope no more false reports about you, like Sturtevant's statement to father, which I overheard, will come to my ears. I'm such a little fool sometimes, that I don't make proper allowance for shrinkage in the reports, and it means so much to me, your good name. I know you'll write back that you are straight, and can't I believe you, and be content? and then, you *man*, you'll get angry with me because I haven't perfect faith in you. That's good business, good ethics, good everything; but you see I am a woman, and get frightened at my own shadow, even when I know it's only *my* shadow. Funny, isn't it? I seem to have brains enough to realize that my feelings are not logical, but the feelings go right on; that's be-

cause I'm a woman. Now, sir, do you know why I'm handing you out a chapter in Revelations? Because I care. And I do wish you could understand in time to save us both—heartache, or worse. And yet, I'm afraid you won't ever completely understand. Do you remember how you returned the picture I had taken for you to carry in your watch? I know I begged for it back. I used every argument under heaven; I didn't wish my face made common, etc., etc.; and yet, when you returned it, reluctantly, and with such consideration for my feelings as showed that I was the one woman on earth to you, I was so mad at you for giving it back to me, that I would have nothing to do with you for weeks. I went with Jimmy King, out of spite, too—as long as I could stand him. So you see, dear, what a contrary creature you've got. Well, you'll never give me back another picture, I'm certain of *that*—but I'm not at all sure you'll apply the principle when the next case comes up. It's asking a lot of a mere man, to require that he divine my wishes and do the right thing, even when I deny emphatically that I want that very thing. But that's the work cut out for you; so cheer up. After reading this, you'll naturally go into judicial session every time you turn around in my presence—or out of it—but I don't want you to do that, just to be your own self: I like you best that way. Now, I can almost hear you say, 'Well, what in

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— is she making such a fuss about it for then? ' George and Helen and I went out to the golf club yesterday. My back's lame yet from getting out of high grass and bunkers; I seem to have special aptitude for getting into trouble, the same as you have. It's the getting out that hurts, and then I haven't your command of language. You haven't had time to play this year, yet, I suppose. Everything is lovely here, now; later, it'll get hot, but I'm coming back home before that happens. There's a certain man in trouble, and I want to get him out. A Mr. Crawford played with me yesterday; we had a foursome on at the Columbia against George and Helen. I know he wanted to be with Helen, but he had to take me. Helen was mad, too, about it; he's really very presentable, for an easterner, and she wanted him herself. She made George miserable all afternoon, and managed to get him, too, after the foursome was over, by going a whole extra round with him, when I know she was ready to drop. I'm good for eighteen holes, and I'm fairly husky myself; but that child has been brought up on brick houses, brick pavements, stone fountains, street railways, and stuffy schoolrooms, all her life, till golf came in; and she has to do all her athletic stunts on her nerve. She is skillful, I must admit, but twenty-seven holes! I see her finish. Of course, Mr. Crawford and she rested on all the tees in the shade. But I couldn't get her

up for breakfast this morning, and then after luncheon, comes Mr. Crawford again to take her out to the links, and the poor child can hardly wiggle, she is so stiff. The love of a maid for a man! I'm telling you this so you'll appreciate what's done for *you*. Of course Helen's going, and I guess he is worth all the agony she'll endure. You can imagine, dear, how lonely I am with all this pairing going on about me; and then there is the 'deal'; I want to know about it. Do you know, I believe Sturtevant isn't through with you, yet. Villiers is managing your paper, I know, and everything seems to be going their way now; but wait till you have set Mr. Villiers out in the street, where he belongs; I'm almost positive Sturtevant will get after you hard. I wish you could have seen the fiendish smile on his face while he was telling father you only asked two hundred dollars more than King for yourself. I've figured it out why he made that statement. He thought father might tell me, or he may have suspected someone was listening—servants do that, you know—and he wished to blast your character in a most efficient way; it makes me shudder to think how nearly he succeeded. I wonder if you'll ever entirely outgrow the effect of my distrust upon you? Please forgive me, dear. You keep an eye upon Sturtevant, now, you hear me? I've got to close now. I want you, dear, and I count the days till I get back. Good night; now be good.

“SUE.”

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"You ain't the only one," and Smutty showed an envelope directed in the same hand to "Mr. John Finnerty." Then he handed Knox a second letter in the same handwriting, and continued:

"And I'm 'Dear Smutty' too. Say, is the old man onto you youngsters? Oh! yes. I was to tell you that he—Colonel Thornton, I mean—has dropped Sturtevant and King, and he's in with Holderness and your push now, and they're going to shove the W. and K. Interurban through the council and the town."

"Where did you get it?" asked Knox joyfully.

"Holderness."

"That's good news; wish I was out of here. Glad *she* doesn't know about me. Say, push that button, will you? Thanks." Knox opened the second letter:


"DEAR:

"Since I last wrote you I've been doing Washington. One old lady said, 'There's nothing in Washington at all, just Pennsylvania Avenue, the Capitol and Monument. There isn't a respectable department store in town, and they still have cable cars. I don't know what makes them go so fast.' Of course they are cable cars so far as you can see. I mean the tracks have a slit between them all the way down town. But there's an electric wire down there and they really are trolley cars, and the con-

ductors start the instant before you get on board and they jar you clear down to your pocket-book as you strike the seat. No, you can't tell where to get on them; there isn't any regular place for them to stop, and Teddy himself doesn't know the exact spots where transfers are acceptable, and the darkies walk all over you when they climb on board. No, there are no public baths in Washington. The streets here are all asphalt, and they all run down hill. I know you don't believe it, but a friend of mine who rides a wheel says it's so, because when you are on a wheel you're always climbing a hill. The little darkies have roller skates, one skate to a darkey, and they coast the asphalt hills on one foot. I always wondered how they got back up the hill again, till one day I saw a string of children, each on one skate, being towed up Fourteenth Street by delivery wagons. The children here put on roller skates shortly after they put on short trousers. They skate to school and play tag on skates and do all sorts of fancy things with them. This reminds me, Washington is crazy on athletics. You can read all about the strenuous life in the magazines, so we need not start at the top of the social structure. Every Sunday School has its base ball team, and they alternate Spalding's Baseball Guide with the catechism, and the Christian Advocate. The 'Immaculates' frequently lick the tar out of 'St. John,' and 'Holy Cross' has

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been known to land on Duffy of the 'Lutheran Evangelicals' for ten singles and a home-run. The Agricultural Department has a lead on all the other Government teams in the league. They are all college men, of course, and the clerks aren't in it with them as a rule. The pitcher is an entomologist, and the first-baseman knows all about every plant that doesn't grow in the United States, the second-baseman is a specialist in tall flies; the short-stop is an authority on milking and daisy-cutters; and the third-baseman works with fowls. You'll read in the paper in double column that the coroner has retired from tennis and will give all his attention to golf, now. And that Paddy Zorinski sure can lick the trainer of the Y. M. C. A. boxing class if they'll only give him a square deal and not intimidate the referee. The basket-ball team of Saint Somebody's College announces a hard schedule, and their veteran captain is confident of winning the pennant this year. The husky Captain's picture, in bloomers, adorns the sporting page. The University Club will play a game of ball with a pot-pourri from all the other clubs in town. Well, it's a beautiful city. The trees and the flowers and the broad clean streets and the wealth of green everywhere make the place seem like one huge park. The colors of the flowers are gorgeous. They need them too, for this region lacks the rich sunsets of the middle west and the New England states. Oh,



I almost forgot about the congressmen; they cut very little figure. Very probably there's one calling on the white cook now in the reception room on the back porch. They receive only five thousand each year—really, it's more like seven thousand with the perquisites counted in—you know, for two years, and they have to support a family out of that and pay up campaign debts and buy a renomination with the balance. Poor devils! Why wouldn't they go after graft? Raise their own salaries to a decent figure? Never! Their constituents simply can't understand that civilized life costs money, and such a course would raise Cain at home for them very suddenly. The senators are in the same box, too, but they have six years to establish a line of graft and everybody knows it, and that they'll succeed; and so their prestige is truly great. In one hotel here a senator's seat in the dining-room is reserved for him even when he is out of the city, and Congress has risen. There are a lot of funny things here that I never knew about before. The District of Columbia inhabitants have no vote, and they have no say in the city government. They can not keep the colored people off the street cars, as they do in the states not ten minutes' ride from Washington. And the white people are practically powerless when it comes to punishing a darkey for theft of household goods. It's as much as one's self-respect is worth to be

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forced to give evidence in a court where darkies are concerned. The accused secures a darkey lawyer and he's likely to revile the white witnesses so that they are forced to leave in disgust. Anyway, taking household goods is not stealing. It is breach of trust and is practically not punishable. Oh, yes, lots of the women here carry revolvers. Cousin Harry is teaching me to shoot, but I'm afraid I wouldn't have the presence of mind to use it. Theaters? Yes, fair, and I saw the Corcoran Art Gallery, too, and the Library of Congress. They are fine, but I don't think much of the White House building, although the grounds are beautiful. A big tree was struck by lightning in front of the sidewalk this week; they have rattling good thunder storms here. I have taken a lot of trolley rides about Washington; down to Mount Vernon, of course, and sat in Washington's seat in the old church and waited for the trolley car in Alexandria. How old it seems—just like a section out of Baltimore or Saint Louis, with its red brick houses and pavements and balconied windows. Then I went up to Great Falls on the Virginia side of the river. It surely is a fine water-fall. They are building the trolley line all the way up. We had to walk the last mile and a half, and it was fine, the path through the woods, though I was afraid of jiggers every time I brushed a bush. Do you know what jiggers are? Well, you don't want to. It's like a caged mosquito bite

with a timelock on the door and the combination forgotten and left in the safe. When you have some twenty bites you retire and cease to receive callers. I've used up nearly all my paper, and anyway I know you're tired, so I'll say good-night. Now be good, and do up that combination!

"SUE.

"P. S.—I met a man who inspects post offices and I told him about Mr. King. He likes me, I know, and he said he'd look into the matter. So, as Smutty says so often, 'Cheer up'! S."

When the maid came, he told her: "I wish you'd get my fountain pen and some note paper and an envelope; and bring some fruit and cake for us."

But Smutty wouldn't touch it till Knox ate half the orange he had fixed; then he propped him up with sofa cushions, and watched while he wrote. Stopping to rest, Knox caught the look of boyish solicitude and affection. "Cheer up, youngster; I'll soon be out again. Villiers won't hurt the *Post* much; and think what a nest of cash King will leave in our business."

"Wish you had seen Frenchy land on King!" Smutty gave a demonstration.

"I wonder if 'twas an accident," mused Knox.

"No," returned Smutty with emphasis; "King can drive terribly straight. He used a cleek that last shot, too. He slices with his brassie. He tried

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to get you, sure. His actions showed it, afterward, too. He's resigned from the club."

"Has it leaked out?"

"I don't think so. Say, Bordman painted the town last week. He's a sad affair now. He saw King hand a roll to Villiers in a restaurant; and Carter, King's stamp-window man, was flush, too; must be good graft in that stamp business."

"I'm afraid there is," Knox agreed. "It's a bad mess. Now you fill up while I finish this; then run over on your wheel and post it for me in Connorsville."

Smutty nodded and fell to peeling an orange, the silence broken only by the scratch of the pen and the tick of a mantel-clock.

Presently Madame Duval entered, and Knox begged hard to finish his note. At the end, he was tired, and glad to sink back when Smutty removed the cushions. The drawn face against the white cushions made Smutty's heart sink. At the post office he sent a note of his own to the same address. "He's pretty sick. He'd get well faster if you came. Smutty."

"She called me Smutty; and I'm proud of the name," he thought, "but Frenchy's second-hand daughter will have to do for me."

CHAPTER XX

MR. NATHAN SAWTELL, Carter's congressman, was a slender gentleman of sixty with a kindly smile. He took in the moves about him with the speed of a snap-shutter, and had already formulated his judgment and commenced action while his associates were still dwelling upon details of the situation or watching the actors out of sight around the corner.

Sawtell backed Carter now and then because Carter made himself generally useful in the machine which Sawtell and his congressional mates steered quietly through the campaigns. Carter, too, made a good understudy of King, and kept Sawtell informed as to the doings in the post office. For every man in the machine knew that King would bear watching, and Sawtell gave him just enough line to encourage him in the idea that he was free to do as he pleased.

This afternoon, Mr. Sawtell received a number of clients in his law office over the Paragon Soda Fount. Among others, a New Yorker, named Sturtevant, called to suggest that K. T. & S. was to go up four points within the week, and to ask for his influence with the Waukesa city council when the trolley franchise came up. Mr. Sawtell thanked

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him kindly for the tip on K. T. & S., and promised to look into the franchise. And Mr. Sturtevant left so pleased with his success that he failed to see Dinah in the reception-room.

Mr. Sawtell had noticed Dinah many times, and admired her pleasant face and laughing eyes at the stamp window in the post office. She reminded him of his daughter, long since laid to rest. And now his set smile grew softer as he rose to offer her a chair, and inquired what he could do for her.

Dinah asked if it were true that he had the appointment of the postmaster in his power. This direct question shocked Mr. Sawtell, but presently he admitted that he had some influence in the matter, and wondered if she proposed to hold him up for the job. No, said Dinah, she had no such foolish idea. She merely wanted her Congressman, Mr. Sawtell, to protect her from Postmaster King. Mr. Sawtell had had a daughter, and would surely understand? He nodded. The soft wrinkled face hardened and the red-rimmed blue eyes glittered. He would look into things at the post office, he assured her. Suddenly he asked what she thought of Carter. She had been engaged to him, and would rather not say, came the reluctant answer. At this Sawtell nodded again. Dinah rose to go, thanking him for his kindness, but before he permitted her to leave by the side entrance, he directed her to report to him any further annoyance from King; and she

was to bear in mind that he, Sawtell, was the real author of her position, and she must sleep nights and not worry over it, because it would be solid in spite of King.

Again she thanked Mr. Sawtell, and left his office in a happy mood. By accident Sturtevant met her in the next block and prevailed upon her to retrace her steps to the Paragon Soda Fount and eat an ice.

Meanwhile King was amusing the old fellow, Sawtell, with jokes of the character supposed to tickle his aged palate, but to-day they carromed from the congressman's disgusted smile. And as King sounded him concerning Carter's promotion he found that a discouraging atmosphere gradually enveloped Sawtell until finally he suggested to King that some sporty fellows were annoying one of the female postal clerks, even during hours, and it must cease. King knew the parties, and could attend to it very well. Here Sawtell looked through King clear down to his unclean soul, and King grew wise and promised to remedy the situation. And then Sawtell dismissed King by the private door into the hall. And Dinah and Sturtevant from the soda-fount window smiled at his sour face as he hurried back to the office.

Then Mr. Sawtell left the office building by the rear entrance, stepped into a closed carriage in waiting on the other side of the block, and the cabby

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drove easily out to Frenchy's home, where Sawtell held a conference with John Knox as he lay in bed, while Madame Duval fumed in the next room at the persistent old idiot who was exciting her patient.

Sturtevant and King would have fumed likewise if they had overheard the conversation. For the truth of the matter was that Mr. Sawtell had sober thoughts of posing as the reform candidate for United States Senator from Michigan, and wished John Knox to enlist for the campaign.

CHAPTER XXI


POSTMASTER KING walked drearily home. His congressman had turned him down and asserted his power as boss in a direction where King had least expected it. "I wonder if that sly puss has rubbed up against old man Sawtell himself?" thought King, and then he pondered over Carter's case. Carter must be squeezed, and now that old man Sawtell wasn't over-anxious to stand behind Carter, King could fix him very nicely—"for the good of the service"; yes, that was it. Carter had no proof of his, King's, stealing; the thing to do was discharge Carter, and if he made counter-charges, King could offer as reasons his inefficiency, and, if necessary, his improper attentions to the female clerks during hours. And everybody knew Carter, so that would settle him.

King had already secured the papers he wanted in the Goodwin estate settlement, by opening the mails—the money he took was a side-issue—and he need not be caught at it now, since this was his sole reason for taking such a risk; incidentally, too, he had set Knox and Sue by the ears, as he thought, and gotten a new line on Mason, the alderman. He wondered suddenly how Sawtell would move in the

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trolley deal, and just how much of a grip he had on Calkins, the Mayor, and on the rest of the machine. He knew Sturtevant had seen Sawtell, but the exact details of their arrangement King had no way of finding out. He knew it because Villiers had watched Sturtevant into Sawtell's office and out of it, and seen him go into the Paragon Soda Fount with Dinah afterward; and now King realized that Dinah had been to Sawtell that very afternoon, just before himself; and he whistled at the audacity of the girl. He had not had time before to think out all that Villiers' report meant to him.

Well, anyway, he, King, stood to win. He had a good block of the trolley stock; he had options on good store sites, a controlling interest in the *Beacon*, and nearly a half interest in the *Michigan Post*, and the post office, and a rake-off on the new drainage sewer—which would be built only two bricks thick, and the inspector fixed to recommend its acceptance by the council when completed—and he had a little stake in the gas company, and a few mining shares; yes, he could afford to quit bothering the mails now, and Carter might hunt a new job. But King scowled at the thought of the red-lipped, black-eyed Italian in Detroit who insisted on a new turquoise collar for her dog. Confound her! and confound her Mexican mummy of a dog! He'd simply have to drop them both—but it was not so easy; still, maybe he could manage it. The blonde in Chi-



cago was more comfortable, and she had no beast of a dog; but then, her husband was unreasonable, and that really was dangerous. He'd be leaving there feet first some day, if he didn't drop *that*! And then, the little co-ed., over at Ann Arbor; well, if he wasn't careful he'd have to marry *her*—and he might do worse. But she lived on six hundred a year now, and her father furnished four hundred of that, so it was considerably cheaper than bringing her home to—well, he wasn't sure she'd suit his mother, and he didn't care to inflict an uncongenial daughter-in-law upon her. And then when he wished to be rid of the girl he could simply drop a hint to the college boys that she was not too straight-laced, and they would soon hound her out of decent society.

Sue Thornton—he wondered if she knew of his part in the golf match with Knox. She was the woman he needed; what a superb figure she presented in evening dress! Her dainty neck and the full rich bust, and the rounded curves of her arms and the flowing lines of her plump limbs, emphasized rather than hidden by her shapely gown.


But there was a power, a goddess, that looked from her fine eyes through him and beyond him. She made him wonder if he knew quite all the regions of being; she seemed on a different plane, but he desired her greatly—when his thoughts were turned her way. At other times his mind pursued

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its interests with consideration merely for King's own self.

He came now to the story-and-a-half frame cottage that served as a home to him and his mother. She had trained woodbine vines all over the place, and set out the geraniums and asters and tulips with her own hand; and started the castor-bean and brought home the johnnie-jump-ups from the grove out on the lake road, together with many varieties of fern. And the trim green lawn and graceful elms and huge maples meant much to her—a home. Her husband had passed away here, and her sons had married and gone to the ends of the earth while she remained. James Livingstone King was her baby, and all her interest centered in him and in her keeping the house tidy, and putting King and his clothes in repair.

To-night she met him in the doorway, and looked up at him waiting for her kiss; she noted the tired, unsatisfied lines in his face, and set herself to banish his troubles. And he responded to her touch and to her cheery gossip, for he loved her with all his brutish soul. She was his first care; everything she desired came before his personal needs, and those of his women friends. He told her no woman was good enough to take her place. He believed it, too. And she was well content to have him to herself; she trembled in fear of the time when a daughter would come home to supplant her in her



son's affections and take the upper hand in her well-ordered home. And she even exulted when malicious gossip came to her at the Ladies' Aid Society meetings. She was more than content that her son should drop the girl after getting the better of her, rather than yield to weak motives of honor and marry her and bring her home. It did not occur to her to despise her son for such mischief-making. A young man must have his fling, she said to herself. And then, too, she had never borne a daughter, so the other side of the case was a blank to her. She minded the gray hairs of the girl's parents and the ruined life of the girl and the tainted existence of the child—supposing one entered the game—not a whit. So her life was unclouded in the perfect love of her son, for he did no harm in her sight.

CHAPTER XXII

As the barber rubbed lather into Knox's heavy beard, a week later, he talked: "Thrown out of Mr. Duval's automobile? Don't wonder your head's sore back there. Been laid up a good while, too, if this beard's any indication. Mr. Villiers is some different. He's great on square treatment—even for corporations. Afraid the council will hold up the trolley road and make them pay for street paving and lights that the citizens ought to pay for. Corporations have to pay their stockholders—the private citizens. Looks queer, Mr. Knox, in your paper, under your name. That statement of John Finnerty's set me to thinking; yes, sir! I talked it over with my men, and we figured that King'd about reached the end. I've talked privately to a lot, and they're with you. Holderness put me on to Villiers' scheme. No; I'm not telling your whereabouts. Things are going all right as it is. You lie still and get well. Villiers looks as if he was seeing visions. He certainly dreamed a *dream* if he thought he could take your paper away and use your own name to defeat your cause."

"You're all of you kind to me, Ed," answered Knox through the lather.

"Time we was—with you bucking the trolley for us and risking a throw-down."

Both were silent till the shaving was done.

"There!" Ed handed Knox a glass.

"Rather peaked, but I am less of a tramp," observed Knox. "Thanks; I'll have you up again."

"Hope not—you'll be out. Good day!" and Ed walked thoughtfully down the stairs, turning over in his practical mind ways and means to help.

On his part, Knox wondered why the barber had happened in that particular morning; neither he nor Frenchy had summoned him; and how did he know where Knox lodged? But Knox found no answer except Smutty—and dozed away among the pillows. He awoke; some one had kissed him. Smiling, he turned to sleep again, thinking himself back in the shadows of delirium, as before.

"Don't you know me?" asked a voice.

He looked now. Smutty and Colonel Thornton had business in the other room. She was sitting on the edge of the bed.

He tried to rise. "No, sir! You lie there and get well for me." Again the lips met his, and her hand pushed the hair back from his forehead.

"You're awful good to me, dear." Knox reached for her hand.

"It's time I was; I've distrusted you enough."

"Don't, please," he protested. "How long will it take you?"

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"What?" She looked at him, puzzled.

"The dresses and things," he explained eagerly.

"Oh!" She blushed and kissed him. "You get up first; they'll come fast enough to suit—even you."

"May we come in?" called Smutty.

"Yes," answered Knox. "Did you send that barber, you rascal?"

"Didn't want you to figure as a cactus in the present game," admitted Smutty.

"Very thoughtful; how did you happen to think of *that*?" asked Knox.

"Well, Dot helped—some." Smutty blushed faintly.

"Eh?" put in Frenchy. "But how did my daughter happen to think, you villain?"

"Cheer up, father; we're engaged," announced Smutty, putting on a bold front.

"They'll outgrow it," laughed Sue.

"We intend to, as soon as we can get a place. I've got to rise fast now. I'm a family man." Smutty surveyed his long trousers with pride.

"Say, Frenchy, I wish you'd issue that extra twenty shares of stock to me and turn Villiers out; you asked for the privilege. Get me a check. I'll write it. The keys to the box in the bank, where I keep the blank shares, are on the dresser," and Knox pointed to the keys.

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"If he will not?" asked Frenchy, handing the checkbook to Knox.

"Assist him forth; Mac will help you—there!" Knox held out the signed check to Frenchy.

"Permit me the sole pleasure, M'sieu." Frenchy bowed low.

"And, Frenchy, won't you kindly edit the paper till I'm fit? And remember, all the cash King put into the paper stays in. Villiers has his stock and will draw his dividends. He can't say a word." Knox laughed as he thought of their plight.

"Oui, I thing so. I'll try—with my new son-in-law. Come, M'sieu Smutty." And the new editor—from France—together with the permanent devil, left the room, both intent upon doing things to the *Michigan Post* sanctum.

Sue removed her hat. She was to stay.

"Now tell me *all* about Washington," commanded Knox.

"You lie still, then, and I will. I've told you a lot in the letters already. Washington is a beautiful city, clean under foot and absolutely smokeless. There used to be two chimneys that smoked; but one fell down, and they glued a smoke-inspector into a doorway on Fourteenth Street to watch the other chimney so it didn't *dare* to smoke any more. And the smoke-inspector's neck set with his nose tilted up to the stars, and he's got a new position as


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transit in the national observatory now—that's the sort of scientific jokes I've been subjected to all spring by Cousin Harry; he's in the Bureau of Standards, you know. And they've got a red light out in front of the Treasury building, and they've taken all the lower boxes out of Belasco's theater, and they are putting new cars on the trolley lines, and cutting down the hills out to Chevy Chase lake. It's a shame, too; for the long coast down those hills was great, almost as good as a toboggan slide. You go on the car hot, and then the moist breeze from the motion of the car cools you off, and pretty soon you make a rush down into a valley so cold that it's like going down cellar after milk. But you ought to see Chevy Chase lake at night! It's lighted up by colored electric lights strung all around the edge of the little lake, and they are mirrored in it, and it's like the big looking-glass they used to set under my Christmas tree with all the tinsel on the tree reflected in it, and the little toy ducks and moss-islands and boats all over it. Up on the hill is the band-stand where the Marine Band holds forth, and there are seats on the hill below it, and the big canoe-swings for the children and a big long ice-cream hall where they stick you twenty cents a dish. After the band has played all it knows, it repeats the waltz music down below in the dance pavilion, and you see some marvelous dancing. Of course I was only joking about the band; they play beauti-

fully together. There are bowling alleys, too. You wouldn't believe how much cooler it is here than back in the city. There sometimes it's unbearable, and people ride all night on the street-cars to get the breeze they create. It is really a crime to condemn so many people in government employ to live in such intolerable climate. And still they go on appropriating money and erecting costly buildings there, and the sites are chosen with reference to convenience and symmetry in the development of the city, rather than with regard for the health and comfort of the thousands who must pass their lives there. I believe that the extra energy that a decent climate would give to the government employees would pay the cost of transplanting the departments. There are plenty of outlying sites on hills and in woods with good shade and fine drainage and a good breeze, but the mass of government people are down town in the low malarial districts, and they haven't even exterminated the mosquitoes here, although they go after them in Cuba. The quarantine is lax, too, so it's a pretty unhealthy city to live in, although the Greater-Washington real estate men will snap your head off if you suggest such a thing. Of course, if you've been raised in a swamp and enjoy a clammy sticky skin and like calomel and quinine, it's all right. The country all about is hilly and green and beautiful, and the whitewashed houses and green blinds set it off fine. Cousin Helen's got a

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new dress that is the *limit*. I wouldn't wear it for a minute, but she thinks it's the real thing. And who do you think I saw at Virginia Beach? Guess! Clara Cornwall. I tried to find out from her about things in Waukesa, but she didn't know a thing outside of marriages and engagements and births and deaths and scandals. I'd supposed her father, the city attorney, would write to her, but she didn't know what I wanted at all. Anyway, we had a fine time; it was too cold to go in, but the ocean made me eat everything in sight. The trolley ride back from Virginia Beach by way of Cape Henry is fine. You go whizzing over swamps and among huge white sand dunes that almost blind you in the sunlight, and once in a while you see through the openings a blue ocean edged with creamy white breakers, and the salt air filters clear in to your soul. And then when you've left the new light-house and the old one on its big sand hill behind and think you've turned your back on the ocean, pretty soon you run out of the swamps and go rocking over a trestle with water all about you and a long line of surf roaring at you on the right, and a dandy little lake on your left, and you wonder how long the crazy car will stay on the shaky track. And then you leave the rumble of the trestle behind and the car sweeps on into the cypress swamps—that's what they call those evergreen trees, isn't it? The ones that are built upside down? With all the spread at



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the top? It surely is a dandy ride. Oh, yes, and I saw the Capitol and the two houses of Congress and sat in the gallery and clapped. It's stupid, I think. You don't get much out of it unless you go into the newspapers and read the stuff all up, and *then* they don't speak on it when you get there, and you've learned a lot of stuff for nothing. And *now*, you must rest . . . *there*, go to sleep!"

Presently he fell away into a doze.

CHAPTER XXIII

FROM the rear of the office Smutty took in the authority which clothed "M'sieu" Frenchy as he descended upon Villiers.

"Will M'sieu Villiers have the kindness to peruse this?" asked Frenchy, presenting a folded paper.

"I'm not signing petitions these days, and I am out of cash, so I can't subscribe to any cause—I hardly see the use, Mr. Duval," returned Villiers.

"Read it; *read* it!" insisted Frenchy.

"Oh, certainly, if it will accommodate M'sieu," agreed Villiers, much bored.

"MR. VILLIERS, MANAGING EDITOR,
The Michigan Post:

Dear Sir—At a meeting of the majority of the stockholders of the *Michigan Post* Co. last Friday night, the resignation of Mr. Villiers was accepted. Mr. Knox—who owns a controlling interest in the paper—was re-elected to the position of Managing Editor. At the same meeting it was decided to issue the remaining twenty shares of stock—authorized at our incorporation—to Mr. John Knox. Further, the salary of the Managing Editor was increased to \$2500 per annum. Mr. Villiers, the former editor, is hereby notified that Mr. Knox will as-

sume control of the *Michigan Post* immediately. Mr. Duval acts for Mr. Knox in this matter, and Mr. Villiers will give place to Mr. Duval upon the presentation of this note. The majority of the stockholders take pleasure in commending Mr. Villiers' activity in behalf of the *Michigan Post*, and especially his zeal in placing the finances of the company upon a sound basis. And they regret exceedingly the business exigency which led to Mr. Villiers' resignation. They wish him success in the field which he has chosen in preference to journalism; but should he at any time desire to return to the profession, Mr. Villiers may rest assured that his services to the *Michigan Post* will not be forgotten. In fact, the *Michigan Post* Co. will take pains to acquaint all the journalistic fraternities and societies with the great modesty of Mr. Villiers. Seldom is a man found who, possessing such originality of view, and wealth of language, voluntarily gives to another the credit for editorials of such weight in a community as those recently published in the *Michigan Post* below the name of John Knox. As a member of the company, Mr. Knox wishes to express his appreciation of the honor conferred by these editorials; and more especially his pleasure in their effectiveness, since no other method available could have shown so completely the grasping hand of the corporation that is seeking to loot our city treasury. Mr. Villiers may rest assured that this notifi-

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cation is fully warranted by legal opinion; and any attempt at evasion or resistance will be summarily dealt with. Mr. Villiers is to terminate his stay in the office of the *Michigan Post*—in official capacity—immediately after reading this note.

Very truly,

THE MICHIGAN POST COMPANY,

Per John Knox,

Mng. Editor."

Villiers' face set in hard lines, as the purport of this note came home to him; involuntarily his hand reached for his stomach, to allay the sudden nausea of failure. Then he rang the desk telephone and gave central Postmaster King's number.

But Frenchy intervened: "Pardon, M'sieu Villiers, but perhaps I answer him better: non! Keep still—" Frenchy put forth a huge hard fist browned on the golf course—"while I answer. Yes," said he to the voice in the receiver, "yes; . . . no, oh, of course, yes—" Frenchy was listening to King's suggestion for the editorials for that week's *Michigan Post*, phrased in journalistic *patois*, of course, and unintelligible to the casual listener at a telephone, for example, such as central.

Finally Frenchy rang off and turned to Villiers, who leaned against the railing, pale and fascinated by the hairy fist close to his face. "Now, M'sieu le Editeur, what have *you* to say? One buys up

stock, oui! One *deposé* le Editeur, but no law get him; pouf, so much worse for *law*. One prints lies in his name, but it is *print*, no forgery. One escapes law again!"

Smutty had summoned the office force to witness the sport. The sight of Frenchy with his fist three inches wide of Villiers' hooked nose appealed to them. As the big arm vibrated under Duval's passion, they watched eagerly, expecting to see Villiers hurled across the aisle against Bordman's desk. But Frenchy was sane; he intended no personal violence, with possible police court complications. 'To Villiers, however, the peril seemed anything but theatrical. He made a sudden rush from the front door of the office, and emerged just in time to arrest with a jar the hurried progress of James Livingstone King along the sidewalk. Villiers instinctively clung to the first object within reach, and together they rolled into the gutter. King quickly recovered, and made for the office door, too angry to regard the derision of the office force grouped in the opening. Bent upon vengeance, he pushed into the crowd to get through, but they closed in upon him: "It's past twelve; no *male* gets in after twelve; we have our orders."

"Frenchy played the ace; we play the *King!*" yelled Mac, the foreman, his cigarette dropping to the floor forgotten.

Somebody gripped King's ankle; Smutty was not

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in evidence at the surface of the whirlpool, so he may have been at the bottom; he was no mean end-rush. A mallet wrecked King's hat, and a second later it was battered down over his eyes. From behind, Scotty pinioned King's arms. Before, "Dutchy" landed on his nose, mouth and jaw the short-arm jabs of an amateur welter-weight. At the last blow King relaxed, so they drew off while Mac and Scotty laid him out upon the folding-table and revived him with cold water.

Frenchy had called up the police station at the first intimation of trouble, requesting the patrol. Likewise he fished Villiers out of the gutter, and convinced him that he had merely left the office hurriedly and come against King by accident—a truth—and that the rest of the trouble came from King's ungovernable temper, possibly stimulated by over-indulgence—also a truth. When Frenchy was through, Mr. Villiers firmly believed that several teeth would desert him if he admitted in the police court anything damaging to Frenchy or to the office force. So when the blue-and-gilt wagon rolled up to the door, Frenchy entered the complaint, "Assault and battery."

The policeman had conducted his resisting man down the office half way to the door before he realized who the prisoner was. "Mr. Duval," said he, hesitating, "do you know who this is? It'll be no end of scandal, sir."

"I'm——" began King, furiously.

"His personality is of no interest, *non!* A fellow makes my office like—like one prize-fight! We, my office force, make no insult, *non!* We stand, *so!* He rush like one bull at my men. Then they protect—naturellement! What I care *who* he is?"

"I'll show——" King started again, but the policeman silenced him. "I know you, sir. And I'm sorry to see you in this trouble. You'd best leave it to me, sir. I'm cool, and you are angry and hurt, too." Then to Frenchy: "I thought Mr. Villiers was mangaging editor here, Mr. Duval? I don't understand how you happened to act with authority in this office, with Mr. Villiers here."

"Your question is very natural. Please read this. Mr. Villiers has resigned; he turned over his desk to me some thirty minutes ago. He will confirm it, *non?* M'sieu le Villiers?"

As the officer looked up from Knox's note to Villiers, he nodded in affirmation, and the officer went on reading. Postmaster King opened his battered mouth wide in astonishment.

"This is all right, Mr. Duval," said the officer, as he handed back the paper. "The judge is at the station (he referred to the police magistrate), and if you will bring your witnesses over, we'll try to get a quick hearing."

"With pleasure, M'sieu l'Officier. Pardon, but

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who is the prisoner?" Frenchy looked King over, mildly interested.

"You—French dog!" hissed King.

"Le bon Dieu! Non—le resemblance is striking, now you speak of it: but, one federal officier? So? Bah! who could expect it?" Frenchy inspected King again, as if contemplating a purchase. "Vraiment, it is he! He rolls in our gutter like one swine. He fights with my office force like—like a madman. Naturellement, I call up the patrol. But there is no wish to embarrass the great federal government, non! Also, M'sieu King, le Editeur, is needed to give us that charming paper, le *Beacon*, le trolley-road headlight, n' est ce pas? Oui, I thing so! So, M'sieu l'Officier, avec permissi6n I withdraw the charge, 'Drunk and disorderly.' Also our paper, the *Michigan Post*, contribute fifteen dollars to buy M'sieu King, l' Editeur, le Postmaster, le trolley-road expert, one new suit of clothes, ready made, like the suit he now wear; I see from its color and style he buy it from Bloomschein, le fashionable tailor. We have no wish to present to our citizens the highly respected Postmaster in a disgraceful street-costume. Smutty, ring for a cab!"

Frenchy passed a five and a ten to the officer, and then offered his cigar-case.

"I'm glad to leave it like that, sir," said he. "I do like a good cigar," and he cut it and drew in his

breath through it preparatory to lighting. Then he tendered the money to King: "Most generous treatment, sir, I must say, after the row you've stirred up in this office," and the officer turned to go.

But King waved it aside, and with better self-control stepped close to Frenchy and whispered: "This is twice you've crossed my path. Take care of the *third* time."

"Le Diable, he watch over you, so I suppose *you* not need to worry, M'sieu King. Ah, now I *thing*; the price of stamps have risen. Are you not glad, M'sieu Postmaster? and the letters, are they still *fat*?" King ground his teeth and grew pale, but kept admirable control over his features. Frenchy continued, so low that the officer could not hear, "I give you one piece of advice, M'sieu; I, we, have proof—ah, it is safe, safe! Locked up; oui, *you* not find it. But we wait, six months, nine months, oui, maybe a year. Then we hand over to Uncle Same, *yes*! In your place, I—but my house never stole, so our blood runs not in *thieves*, I know not for sure, but I *thing* I kill myself. The disgrace! all the people know; your head sink in shame; *horrible*! And then they shave your head and you get one number and stripes, and your head always hang, and your shoulders droop, five, eight, maybe ten year. Then you come out, and you not *able* to

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straighten up. You never can look one in the eye, so, better you *kill* yourself. You will *thing* of it; oui, I give good advice, M'sieu."

With clinched hands and set teeth King managed to walk to the cab and seat himself; but with the door closed and the cab in motion he relaxed in a nervous chill. At his rooms he took a stiff glass of whiskey and tried to forget it, but Frenchy was right: assuredly King would think it over.

"Give that money to any member of your force that is sick. We can't touch it again," said Frenchy to the officer.

"All right, sir; Moran's wife will appreciate this. Her man's in a bad way with the grippe. Good-day, sir; will Mr. Knox be back soon? and say, what *is* the truth about his sickness? *Was* he laid out by an enemy?"

"This is in confidence?" asked Frenchy, impressively.

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, yes; he was."

"It's a dirty trick; who?" The officer fingered his club.

"That I can't tell you even in confidence," returned Frenchy.

"You know?" persisted the officer.

Frenchy was silent.

"Beg pardon, sir; I didn't mean to be inquisi-

tive, but Knox is square; you remember how he stood up for the captain and the force, when that amateur civic reformation went after us last year? *We* haven't forgotten it, and plenty of us'll take a hand if—well, you understand?"

"No offense; I feel that way myself—Mr. Dougal, is it? Yes, I thought I knew your name. Now, I met you before, Mr. Dougal, somewhere?" suggested Frenchy.

"Yes, I——" the officer stopped, embarrassed.

"Oui, yes, you ran me in for feeling proud, one day three years ago, non?" Frenchy smiled at the officer's discomfiture.

"That's about it; all in the line of business," confessed Mr. Dougal.

"Certainement! I was carrying off my part well. I remember you played yours with grand effect, see!" Frenchy felt of a small bump on his head where the officer's club had served to counteract the influence of the anesthetic.

"That Frenchman certainly is a brick," muttered Officer Dougal to himself, as he swung up into the patrol-wagon.

CHAPTER XXIV

"VILLIERS is 'out, now, men: Mr. Knox will be back at his desk in a few weeks, and then everything will go on as it used to. I am to edit the paper. Voila!" Frenchy struck a pose, and read Knox's letter to Villiers, stopping here and there to comment enthusiastically on the wording.

"'They *regret* the business *exigency* which led to Mr. Villiers' resignation!' Grande! But what means 'exigency'? I have not seen it; at least, not lately."

"Ex-ago, Latin; drive out; just fits, Frenchy!" answered Keyes, a student compositor. "'Ago' means *anything*, from running a rotary press to kicking Villiers into the street."

"Ah, it fits well. And Villiers is thanked 'for placing the paper on a sound financial basis': good, is it not? Voila! Je suis l'editeur—till M'sieu Knox arrives; I consult with him, I write his thoughts, best I can; then you, Mac, Scotty, Dutchy, Keyes, Smutty, *all*, you help me when I make mistake, non? I, we *all*, work for M'sieur Knox. I pray no more for Frenchy, pour quoi? It is no good—*mais*, I have candles, and Pere Florian spend his time on my salary in prayers for

M'sieu Knox—oui! I? *me?* I believe it not; but again, I do not know; it may help, and I leave out nothing." Frenchy shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, Mr. Editor. Get busy you 'comps.' That's the best way to help Knox, now you are on *his* salary-roll. Smutty, jerk those galley-proofs like all hell was after you! And Mr. Bordman and the editor will get 'em back on the jump. We've got to move, if we reset half of that damned fool Villiers' stuff—as we must, to get sense into the paper again!" Mac panted after this effort; his tobacco-heart was bothering not a little these days.

"What's the matter with Mr. Knox?" yelled Keyes.

"He's all right," answered the 'comps,' Smutty piping up on the "all."

"And Mac?" called Keyes again.

"Nothin'; he's *Irish!*" returned Smutty, so quickly that the answering cheer dissolved into a good-natured laugh, in which Mac joined. Then all hands fell to, happy in the thought that their editor had come into his own again, and reveling in the prospect of new lamps with green shades, and a hot lunch at midnight on Friday. Villiers had refused them double pay for overtime, too, which Knox always allowed; and Villiers had dealt out second-grade oil, and required them to replace broken lamp-chimneys. They had to go out for their lunch, too, and thus missed half the fun of

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the week. For Knox and Bordman boiled coffee over the big six-inch argand lamp, and dealt it out lavishly, good coffee, not scraps like the lunch-counter stuff. And with it Knox mingled no small portion of his own good cheer; commendation, jokes, suggestions, records to beat, how the firm was coming on; he made the Friday night a family gathering. If he were shy on the collections, he said so, and asked as a favor that they allow him a part of the week's wages as a loan, so that he could make good, and they knew he'd advance cash, too, in case of sickness. Nobody heard him squeal, either, when Mooney died and left his wife owing Knox fifty dollars, which she'd no prospect in the world of paying. Instead, he actually paid the holy-ground charges of the church, and he a Protestant.

So Knox would steer them again, these drifting compositors, with their vices of the damned, and hearts like those of children—and they were happy.

Frenchy settled to the long strips of galley proof which Smutty kept unloading on his desk and on Bordman's. The city editor was out on a special assignment—an ex-Governor or ex-somebody had died and must be given an appropriate send-off. Presently as he looked up from the scratched and ringed proof, Frenchy saw Sturtevant watching him curiously.

“Mr. Villiers in?” asked he.

"No, Mr. Villiers has 'just stepped out.'" Frenchy resumed his correction of proof.

"How soon will he be in again?" persisted Sturtevant.

"He say nothing about returning." Frenchy blew a thin wreath of smoke from the corner of his mouth, and scratched at the proof.

"That's odd—I had an appointment with him; I'm five minutes late, too."

"Won't you have a chair, M'sieu?" asked Frenchy, without looking up.

"My name's Sturtevant; thanks, I will. Are you regularly employed on the paper, Mr. ——?" inquired Sturtevant.

"Duval, Jean Baptiste, entirely at your service, M'sieu Sturtevant. Non, not *regular*; for a short period during M'sieu Villiers' enforced absence."

"Eh, what's that? Villiers' absence! He said nothing about it to me. Strange—was it sudden, his going?" Sturtevant chewed his moustache.

"Oui, it seems so—ask M'sieu Bordman," advised Frenchy, solemnly.

"Oh, Lord, yes," agreed Bordman, catching the spirit of Frenchy's sarcasm.

"A death? I can scarcely conceive of a less serious reason taking him away at this time." Sturtevant was puzzled, and looked it.

"Non, not a death, but near it, eh, M'sieu Bordman?" admitted Frenchy.

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"Very close to it," said Bordman, winking a watery blue eye at Frenchy.

"But surely you have some rough notion of the length of Mr. Villiers' probable stay with the sick relative, Mr. Duval?" insisted Sturtevant.

"Oui, yes, I thing he stay with him a long time—two months anyway; he might not leave him at all; I don't know. He not say." Frenchy carefully tamped the ashes in his corncob pipe with the butt of a huge fountain-pen, apparently built to fit the pipe, and went on smoking and correcting. He was deep in thought.

"A—has—ah, by the way, who is the editor of the paper during Mr. Villiers' absence?"

"Fr—I mean, M'sieu Duval, is our managing editor," volunteered Bordman, "the city editor is out."

"I see. M'sieu Duval, can you spare me a few minutes in private?" There was a courtesy in Sturtevant's address which called for recognition.

"With pleasure, M'sieu Sturtevant." Frenchy led the way to the back room, lighted the gas, and closed the door.

"There was a deal on, Mr. Duval, between Mr. Villiers and myself. I have given the paper considerable advertising, and as is customary, you know, a large advertiser receives editorial mention of a favorable sort. So I'd like to look over the proof of the editorials."

"Certainly, M'sieu." Frenchy opened the door

and shortly returned with the galley-proofs of Villiers' editorials.

As Sturtevant glanced at the leader he was interested in, he frowned, started, and then read carefully, noting each erasure and substitution. "Did *you* do that?" he asked, half rising.

"Oui; has M'sieu any suggestions?" Frenchy looked at him innocently.

"Great——" Sturtevant muttered to himself, "'any suggestions?' and I wrote it myself!" Aloud he continued, "Yes, name your figure. This appears to be a hold-up."

"If M'sieu Sturtevant will explain more fully? He has the advantage. I do not comprehend—my figure?"

"Exactly; your figure: you know those editorials were necessary to us, and doubtless proposed to look me up if I didn't come into the office. Yes, what will it cost me to run that stuff as originally set up in type?" Sturtevant bit his lip.

"I begin to see, *yes*. We charge nothing for editorials, M'sieu Sturtevant. But it is plain that M'sieu Villiers was—let us say—mistaken. There is much ignorance in that editorial; surely M'sieu Sturtevant sees it? And we cannot let our subscribers *think* we know so little as that. M'sieu Villiers is surely a worthy man, and it becomes us ill to say it behind him, but he was in error there, in sad error." Frenchy's shoulders went up.

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"But that isn't the question. I am asking how much it will cost to have it run *as it is?*" maintained Sturtevant.

"In the advertising column?" asked Frenchy, coolly.

"No, as an editorial," snapped Sturtevant.

"One hundred and fifty dollars, *cash*, M'sieu," drawled Frenchy.

"That's better. When I see it in the paper, I'll mail you a check." Sturtevant breathed easier.

"No. Cash. Now!" demanded Frenchy.

"What assurance have I——" began Sturtevant.

"My word, M'sieu. It is unfortunate, you call me a liar." Frenchy's fist was partly closed.

Sturtevant looked at Frenchy, and agreed, "it would be unfortunate. Here, take it."

"Correct. You are satisfied if I run the editorial as set up?" inquired Frenchy.

"Yes. But I'll correct the proof and take a copy, and you may have one. If there is any question about it we have each got the evidence.

"Certainement!" and Frenchy turned out the gas.

CHAPTER XXV

IN answer to Sue's message, carried by Smutty, Col. Thornton came up to Knox's room that afternoon. She held up a warning hand, lest he wake Knox, and leaving Madame Duval on watch, led the Colonel into a room across the hall, where they might talk.

"He will recover?" asked he.

"Yes: I don't dare think otherwise."

"It is settled, then, daughter? But where do I come in? Shall I get you a new mother?"

"No, you foolish dad. You've been bossed enough as it is. *You've* got to live with us."

"You mean, you've got to live with *me*," laughed the Colonel. "Well, I suppose I will have to put up with you. Knox is easy, and besides, *you* will tend to *him*, but you'll think you own the earth; once you are a sedate matron, we can't call our souls our own. Do you know, Sue, I've about made up my mind to marry William to the cook, to keep him properly humble."

"Not much! I can run both of them now. But don't you dare change Hannah to a married woman. She'd be intolerable." Sue laughed at the prospect.

"Evidently my estimate of the change produced

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by marriage is correct. Be merciful, Sue, to Knox and me."

"All right, you old jollier. *Dad*, don't you dare to speak to Mr. King again."

"*He* laid Knox out, did he?"

"Yes; we can't *say* much about it; not an easy thing to prove, you know. But Frenchy and Smutty—the little Finnerty boy who works for Mr. Knox, you know—saw the shot. It was deliberate, with no warning."

"Certainly, Sue. And some others will fail to recognize Mr. King hereafter. Have you read this?" Colonel Thornton drew a folded paper from his large flat pocketbook.

Sue took the paper and read Smutty's accusation of Mr. J. K. Sturtevant, which the civic federation was circulating.

"I think that settles Mr. Sturtevant, so far as public confidence is concerned," said the Colonel, as Sue looked up.

"It's rather fortunate that you broke with him. Do you know, I believe *he*"—Sue pointed across the hall to Knox's room—"kept your name out of it."

"It looks that way. I certainly was in the counsel of Mr. Sturtevant; can't say I ever looked at securing newspaper notice as a criminal transaction, before. But somehow it does seem in the class with buying a city council, *now*. And I've drawn the line there, always. Anyway, Sturtevant and Sturte-

vant's road are up against it now. Those editorials of Villiers' in Knox's paper, and the proper explanation of them, as everybody understands it now, have started a strong public opinion in favor of the W. & K. road, Sturtevant's rival."

"You've helped some?" asked Sue.

"A little, here and there, Sue."

"How about the council?"

"I don't know. We rescinded our first action, but I believe Sturtevant has got a majority again; still, they'll probably break down before the pressure of the public."

"But you might lose, and Sturtevant win?" persisted Sue.

"Yes; such things have happened," he admitted reluctantly.

"And the people can't *do* anything?"

"That's about it," said he. "The road would probably keep on running, once the tracks were laid through town. But cheer up, we'll come out all right. We want Knox, now. Go see if he is awake." But Knox was sleeping, so the Colonel went downstairs and smoked on the verandah until Sue should call him.

When Knox awoke, he looked into her eyes, as she sat building castles for them both. A sense of the great love that was his, came home to him. He put out his hand. She took it and felt anxiously for fever, then passed a soft, cool hand over his fore-

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head. "You're lots better, dear. Father's been here to see us, and I told him—he insists on our living with him." Madame Duval thoughtfully went downstairs on an errand.

Sue closed Knox's mouth with her hand, so he felt the ring—his ring—against his lips. "Now, don't you get off any of your foolish independence. I'm all dad's got. He'll be lonely—as you'll be some day, maybe, when I'm gone and there's only a second edition of me left. Don't you see, dear?" Knox nodded, and his lips kissed the hand and the ring. Sue continued: "He likes you—I told you that before—and you mustn't bother your conscientious old head about the way he got the cash we're going to have. It all came straight." She stroked the "old head," looking in vain for a white hair. "Now, I'm going to call him up—he's downstairs—are you ready?"

"Not quite." Knox took her hand from his mouth and rose to protest against this "gag-rule." "You don't give a fellow a chance to get in a word. You're just the dearest girl in the world. *Have* you seen that dressmaker yet?"

"Dressmaker? Oh, no; but I'll start the process of construction to-morrow. I suppose I ought to advertise for bids; that's your way, isn't it? *Now* will you be good and get well?"

"Watch me! Sue, anything you plan or wish goes with me. Honest, I don't know what I've done

to merit the love I saw in your eyes just now when I woke up——”

“Hush, dear—didn’t I see the same in yours? You are giving me the same. Don’t you know, it’s just the same to me—and more?”

“I won’t argue about the quantity, Sue. You told me I’d never understand you, in your letter from Washington, and I suppose you know. But don’t you forget, dear, that the blundering fellow who hurts you sometimes, was built that way by an idiotic providence, or he wouldn’t do it. His intentions are all right.”

“I know, we’re both botched jobs—but I never could endure perfection, anyway. Now I’m going to call father.” She started up from his side.

“Wait; I want you. He’s good in his place, but he can wait a while. No, come back here.” Knox put out his hand to keep her.

“You’re a regular baby—well, I suppose I’ll have to humor you, till you get well,” and she came back.

“And then it’s up to me to humor you?” laughed Knox.

“No, I don’t have to be indulged,” she maintained.

“I understand; you simply take what you want,” said he.

“That’s more like it. Now, let me go.”

“He can wait a while. I know his cigar isn’t

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finished, and I'll bet he's asleep," objected Knox, still unsatisfied.

But finally Miss Thornton escaped, and—as Knox had predicted—she found the Colonel asleep, with the cigar on his vest and the newspaper dropped from his relaxed hand. Then, seemingly inconsistent, she hastened back to the captivity upstairs.

CHAPTER XXVI

AFTER dinner, Frenchy came up to make his report of the day's work. Sue proposed to dismiss the meeting when the patient became unduly excited, and so remained while Frenchy recounted the discomfiture of Mr. King at the office of the *Michigan Post*. Knox and Sue were both convulsed. The pompous Mr. James Livingstone King in the gutter! Fifteen dollars for a new suit! Usually he gave forty-five to sixty dollars. And then, allowed to escape prosecution and a fine with costs, only by Frenchy's unwelcome generosity.

"Frenchy, I really see no reason why I should get back to work at all. I'd have bungled that situation, to a dead certainty," said Knox.

"Non! A little cheap cunning, yes, that I have, M'sieu Knox, but solid brains like you—non, I know it, I do nothing solid. And then, I forgot: M'sieu Sturtevant, he call; and when he find I have corrected the proof of Villiers' editorial so it read unfavorable to Sturtevant and his trolley road, M'sieu Sturtevant offer me one hundred and fifty dollars if I leave the editorial go in as Villiers had it; and I took it."

"What!" exclaimed Sue, horrified, "you took the *money?*"

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"Oui! why not? The Villiers editorial, it run, as agreed. We make one hundred fifty dollars. You not know it is there, M'sieu Knox. To-night we plan another editorial; print it below the other one, and you sign it, *John Knox*. I have kept my agreement with Sturtevant. *You* have sent in your editorial. You know nothing about Villiers' editorial at all; non, nothing."

"That's all right, Frenchy; we'll run the two editorials. But you'll send back the money; we don't want it, it's dirty," advised Knox.

"Yes, that's better, M'sieu Knox; as I say, you have the solid brains; your way we have no charge of unfair dealing against us possible. My way, he might hurt us," agreed Frenchy.

"You must both of you look out for Mr. King, now. He'll be simply furious. Do you know, Mr. Duval, I do wish he hadn't suffered that last humiliation. He deserved it, and all that; but it was really terrible to a man like Mr. King. And his revenge will surely come, if you don't foresee it and get ahead of him. I can't risk Mr. Knox needlessly, you know." She looked anxiously at Knox to see how he was standing the company.

"You fix up the editorial, both of you; I'm tired—you see I'm being good, dear. Good-night, Frenchy. Thanks for your clear-headed work; and you will take care of your person, won't you, old

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man? King is a devil, that's sure." Knox held out his hand to Frenchy.

"Yes, I'll fix him. Bon soir, M'sieu Knox. May you rest well and dream—mais, the dreams will be all right. I thing so." With a gallant smile he bowed to Miss Thornton and left the room with her.

CHAPTER XXVII

By quarter after twelve Saturday noon, the *Beacon* office was quiet. The big cylinder presses had stopped their steady roll, and the clattering little Gordons rested with their jaws open, ready for the next program, or the unwary pressman's fingers. Compositors and office force were at lunch, but the editor was still busy.

King leaned forward in his chair, hands on knees, a seal-ring prominent in the foreground. Villiers, the picture of attenuated failure, lay back in an arm-chair against the side wall.

"It seems you fell down at every point, Villiers. If I wanted to buy a majority of stock in a company, you may rest assured that I'd find out how many shares were out, or could be put out." King shut his jaw as though he had never made a mistake in his life.

"But it was your idea to start with, you know. And——" But King cut Villiers' justification off short:

"I left you to attend to the details; you are supposed to use a little head-work in the game. They tell me your handling of the office force was rattle-brained in the extreme: what are you going to do now?"

"Your city editorship?" suggested Villiers.

"Got a better man than you in it now. Can't afford to return to your blundering management. Are you going to stick to newspaper work?" asked King.

"I'll have to; don't know any other. They've threatened me with exposure if I go on any of the papers around here, but I guess I can pull through. Newspaper men are not saints," said Villiers, hopefully.

"There's a city editor wanted in Orland. You'd better take it. Later you can get the post office, if you work it right. I'll put you in there if you say so." King paused to let Villiers consider his offer.

"There's nothing else in sight; I'll take it," agreed Villiers after a silence.

"Well, say, did you know that Knox went across the lake after Frenchy, some weeks ago?" asked King.

"Yes. What of it?" Villiers awaited developments.

"That's your first news item."

"You'll have to explain," said Villiers.

"You run an editorial on how the gods must laugh to see a reform editor like Mr. Knox, of the *Michigan Post*, off on his own private debauch, while his paper is run by a drunken bookkeeper, and a red-headed monkey of an office boy." King leered at Villiers, waiting for the full effect of such a public statement upon Knox to come home to him.

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"Yes; but you have no proof. Knox will sue," objected Villiers.

"He can't say a word without dragging Frenchy's name in the dirt. He'll stand it himself before he'll let Mrs. Duval know how clean a man her husband really is. Knox is just that style of fool. It is up to us to blast his reputation, now. Later, when the truth comes out, French'll get his share. I propose to look after M'sieu Duval. And it happens I have proof. From some friends of mine, and the hostess with whom Frenchy stopped; in fact, from several." King laughed triumphantly.

"In writing?" asked Villiers, still unsatisfied.

"No, of course not; but I have their names and addresses and they could be called in case of trial," said King.

"I don't like it; it's not safe."

"I'm not interested in your preferences, Villiers; you'll run that item if you want the job." King put forth his ultimatum.

"I suppose I must, then. But I don't like it," whined Villiers.

Through the street door Sturtevant burst in upon them waving a freshly-printed *Michigan Post* in their faces. "Ah, here you are, Mr. Villiers! How's your sick relative? Quick recovery, it seems. I paid you to run this editorial. Then, owing to your unaccountable disappearance, I was forced to pay Mr. Duval cash to leave it intact. So it is—but look

at the paragraph below it. I'll get back at them for this double dealing. They'll learn to stay bought, when *I'm* through." But before either King or Villiers could reply, Smutty shot through the door, and panted out: "Fren—I mean, Mr. Duval, our editor, sends this to you, Mr. Sturtevant. There's no answer. He said you'd know what it was for, even if you couldn't *understand*." Smutty handed an envelope to Sturtevant and left.

Sturtevant placed the envelope in his pocket, unopened, and again suggested to Villiers, "Well, we'll have that explanation now."

"It's perfectly simple," said King. "Villiers didn't know that an extra twenty shares of *Michigan Post* Company stock were in Knox's possession, waiting only to be issued. He got the cash from God knows where, and placed them with himself. Then he voted Villiers out, and Frenchy, Duval, you know, turned Villiers into the street for him——"

"Into you, rather, King," suggested Villiers with a green smile.

"Yes, damn you," agreed King, enraged at the thought.

"You should have kept your temper, King. The trouble came mostly because you got wrathful," said Sturtevant, who had heard of King's discomfiture. "That's a poor plan. Always let the other fellow get mad."

"Well, Villiers has no spirit at all. He ought to

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be a howling success on that basis," returned King, venting his spleen on the weakest.

"You are both a good ways from the top. Elements of success in both, but the game is young yet," said Sturtevant judicially. "I, for one, never made such a break as to hit my opponent with a golf-ball, even by accident, when a close deal was on. You never can tell how much sympathy for a man will do. Knox's sickness may be the end of us. Thornton and that daughter of his are bucking us now; and the council is beginning to watch its shadow at night, for fear the Civic Federation will get it. Everyone seems to be looking after Knox's fight, now he's laid up."

King looked quickly at Sturtevant and at Villiers.

"You don't think——?" he began.

But Sturtevant finished for him. "Exactly, I don't think: I have the facts in mind. That accident was unlucky—very. And entirely unnecessary. You really ought to think, Mr. King; do you realize that we've got to go against that old fox, Thornton? He was on our side. I didn't queer him. I didn't turn Knox out of his paper when he was conducting a consistent attack on us; rather beneficial, it was, to have a visionary reformer after us. We could plead that we were dead practical, while he was merely after an issue to keep his paper alive.

You killed that—you and Villiers—with your thin scheme of turning Knox out of his paper, and then you got him flat on his back in bed—out of the game. That leaves us to pose as the rapacious corporation. A nice cartoon we'll be in, some of these mornings! If I didn't see imbecility in every move, I'd be asking what stake you had in the other road. For God's sake, King, use your head!"

Villiers grinned at King's discomfiture, but King shut his teeth tight together. He was acting upon Sturtevant's advice, and keeping cool while Sturtevant raged. "What's the next move, then?" asked King. "It's up to you, since we're idiots. And as to your criticism of my scheme for removing Knox from his paper, I seem to remember a man named Sturtevant who tried to buy Knox and his paper outright."

"I simply bought the cheaper man, King by name," said Sturtevant coldly. "And hereafter I'll be able to handle my affairs without your assistance: our moves will be independent. I can't afford to risk any more of your childish breaks in such a heavy deal."

"As you please, but our advertising contract goes on just the same." King referred to the ledger. "It has two weeks more to run, I see."

"No, I'll cancel it. You do us no good. The money's wasted, anyway, I can't save that; but

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that's no reason why I should let you print stuff backing me. Your backing would foul an angel, just now."

"All right. Then we'll find reasons why the council should refuse you right of way, and set them forth in the *Beacon*: we're always public spirited, you know. I don't anticipate much bother getting up a good line of argument." King smiled and waited for Sturtevant to squirm.

"I suppose you'll quit——?" Sturtevant took an envelope from his pocket, held it up to the light, felt of it with thumb and forefinger, and then held it over an imaginary tea-kettle to steam the gum. He made the motions of rolling a pencil under the flap of the envelope from top to tongue, opened it, and then withdrew a paper, and resealed the envelope. Then he laughed at King, an evil laugh. At this dumb show of rifling the U. S. Mail, the whisky-red faded from King's face.

"You have a good imagination, Sturtevant," he protested, "but really we'd better let the old arrangement go on; you can write your own copy for the *Beacon*, you know, and avoid my idiocy, if that worries you."

"Well, I don't know but you are right, at least for two weeks, and then I'll see how your services stack up. You need to get busy, if you travel with us, that's a fact." Sturtevant rested, content with scaring King into subjection. He had had only a

suspicion of King's speculations to go upon, but now he felt sure of his ground. The shock of the accusation had unsettled King so that for an instant he trembled, and Sturtevant saw it, and Villiers saw, too.

"When you're ready to tell me your plans, I'll get to work. I'm due at lunch, now. Villiers, I want to see you afterward." And King hurried away as though in need of a stimulant to help him play the game.

When Villiers left, too, Sturtevant stood looking after him, with the contents of the envelope he had opened for King's benefit, still in his hand. It felt soft, like notes. Around the bills was Frenchy's explanation: "I am unable to carry out my agreement, so I am returning the consideration to you by messenger. Very truly, J. B. Duval."

"Well——" said Sturtevant, shocked by this strange honesty.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ONE morning two weeks later Sue came in with Madame Duval to see Knox. He was sitting up in the Morris chair, and looked more like John Knox, in his bright lounging robe and yellow slippers.

"How's the invalid?" asked she.

"Fine! I'll be out next week, and Frenchy can go back to golf."

"I'll *see* about that!" put in Madame Duval, and then excused herself for a moment.

"I wonder if you know how it strikes me to hear you say 'us'?" he looked at her so that she blushed.

"It seems good to say it, too," she admitted. "It was awful, when I thought you were—impossible, and I must give you up. I'm never going to lose faith in you again, no matter *what* happens—you understand. Now, just to prove it, let me read you what an obituary the *Orland Sun* has given you:


" 'A GAY REFORMER.

" 'An interesting side-light upon the management of our high-minded neighbor, the *Michigan Post*, has come to us recently. Our readers have followed with interest the philanthropic attitude of that weekly toward the new trolley-road. This new electric road, as we are all aware, is seeking to con-

nect the towns of the state and give us a rapid transit which will open up the country, promote trade for our towns, give the farms city comforts, and civilize the state generally. But our esteemed neighbor, the *Michigan Post*, has done its best to hold up the road. Its professed motives are to secure a proper compensation to the town for the right of way. But it requires little insight to get behind this pose. Evidently one of two things—or possibly both—has happened: either the merchants of that self-seeking town, who advertise in the *Michigan Post*, are afraid they will lose trade when their citizens can get things cheaply in Orland, or they have brought pressure to bear upon Mr. Knox to voice their sentiments and delay the building of the road; or the traction company may have decided that its conscience, or its pocketbook, will not allow it to pay Mr. Knox the price he demands for his paper's influence. Possibly there is a little of each consideration back of the *Michigan Post's* obstruction policy. But to return to the side-light which we started to turn upon this little game of Mr. Knox's: It seems that some weeks ago a certain well-bred gentleman, in company with other gentlemen of like connection in good society, cut across our big lake in heavy weather in a forty-foot motor-boat belonging to one of the party. Everything indicates that the liquid fuel was not confined to the gasoline-tank. To judge from the boat's bunkers, it might

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be an experimental trip to test the motive power of alcohol; and viewed from this standpoint the voyage proved a grand success, for the speed attained by the boat and the party is unquestioned. We do not care to burden our readers with an account of police-court proceedings in Michigan City or in Hammond: what's the use? But it is interesting to note that during a most strenuous attack by the *Michigan Post* upon the traction company and its methods, that righteous paper was in charge of a book-keeper who is subject to periodical lapses from sobriety, and who usually finds it necessary to fortify himself between these lapses; and the other responsible man in the *Michigan Post* office was an office-boy in short pants and Titian-red hair who boasts the cleanly name of "Smutty." We understand that Mr. Knox has been unwell for several weeks lately, and no one has been able to unearth him, although several parties are interested in his whereabouts, especially the collectors from large houses dealing in newspaper supplies. Certain female acquaintances of the well-bred gentleman we first referred to, acquaintances in Michigan City, Hammond and Chicago, expressed to our reporter concern at this gentleman's illness, but they wondered how he could stand the pace as well as he did. We must admit that such proceedings tend to shake our faith in unrewarded patriotism in newspaper policy. We are in business for our health, our-



selves. We expect to increase our circulation, expand our advertising columns, and raise the rate per inch, when the new trolley-road brings in new business. We intend to buy the baby a rattle at first hand, and get her a new automobile with a real Frenchman to drive it; and a rotary fan in front, to cool her cylinders and disperse her noise—not the baby's—and when the baby's asleep we may take a ride to the office ourselves and back again; and if our wife is good, she may ride with the Frenchman. These are *our* motives; we are not converting the heathen; at least, not for nothing.' ”

“ Well? ” said Knox, his teeth gritting.

“ It's horrid; but any man that's idiot enough to go slumming across the lake to save a friend, can expect just such constructions to be put upon his actions. You 'Gay Reformer!' ” Sue laughed at him.

“ You are a very dear woman, Sue—God bless that imp, Smutty. He explained that trip to you, didn't he? ”

“ Yes, he was careful about it, too. That boy is a perfect little gentleman, dear; did you know it? ”


“ Our office isn't calculated to bring out that side of a boy, but I know he has a fine mother. I'd trust Smutty with anything, ” agreed Knox.

“ Now listen to Mr. King's editorial comment in the *Beacon* upon the *Sun's* drive at you, John: ”

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“‘We are glad to correct some mistakes in the article headed “A Gay Reformer,” which appeared in last week’s *Orland Sun*. Mr. Knox did not cross the lake with the motor-boat party; he left on the *John Richmond*. Mr. Habberman tells us that Mr. Knox determined upon his trip across the lake immediately upon hearing that the motor-boat had started for the other side. We do not know Mr. Knox’s reasons for wishing to join the jolly company in the motor-boat—he will of course explain them himself, upon his return. As to the management of the *Michigan Post* during Mr. Knox’s absence, his editorials were written before he started away; his city editor is competent, and the news items and special articles were of the usual high grade. Mr. Knox’s reasons for absenting himself from town are none of our business: we are accustomed to taking a vacation ourselves when we feel disposed—but it is true that he has been much sought for by men to whom he is under obligations, and he would do well another time to leave directions so that mail can be forwarded to him. We regret exceedingly that the *Orland Sun* has taken the occasion to snap at Mr. Knox’s heels, and we are sure he will explain everything satisfactorily to the public, as he is bound to do.’”

“That is quite an idea of King’s: to pose as my defender. At the same time he forces me into a



most awkward position," said Knox. "He thinks I'll have to explain my trip across the lake, now."

"I shouldn't think Mr. King would dare to ask that you explain your prolonged absence from the office, too," objected Miss Thornton.

"He's probably figuring on my having private reasons for keeping him out of it. And he's right. I don't care to pose as a martyr. Do you demand an explanation to the public, Sue?"

"I? You'll have to use your own judgment, dear. I don't see how you can say anything. I suppose we ought not to judge M'sieu Duval by American standards. He's just a big good-natured animal—European. But I do wish Mrs. Duval hadn't annexed him. And he certainly is devoted to you: say, John, let's ask father about it."

"All right. I usually decide things myself, but this is his affair, too; my reputation. I can guess what he'll say."

"What?"

"To ignore the matter entirely. The public forgets—has troubles of its own."

"I'd like to see you cleared of this mean suspicion," she objected. "It will lurk at the bottom of people's hearts long after we forget it. But I wonder about Frenchy—will he let you shield him in this manner? And at such a cost to your good name? He's an impulsive fellow, you know."

"Madame Duval mustn't see those papers this

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week," said Knox suddenly. "I wonder what the *Michigan Post*—Frenchy's paper—has to say about the *Orland Sun's* ovation to me?"

"Maybe he hasn't seen it."

"On the contrary, he's probably read every cub newspaper within three hundred miles this week. He's new in the editor's chair, you know, and he'll feel bound to see every paper." Knox laughed, as the picture of Frenchy, wisely burrowing into piles of papers, rose before him.

Colonel Thornton came in upon them at this point.

"Listen to this, father," commanded Sue, and read him the *Orland Sun's* attack upon Knox. The Colonel frowned and looked hard at Knox, who lay with his face to the wall during the reading. But the Colonel's face cleared as the meanness of the editorial came home to him.

"And this, too! Isn't it kind, Mr. King's defense of John?" Sue sniffed and went on with King's editorial correction of the *Orland Sun*. When she had finished, Knox turned toward the Colonel: "It's not true, you know."

"My dear boy, I know *you*," the Colonel hastened to reassure him. "But what are you going to do about these attacks?"

"How would it do to ignore them?" asked Knox.

"Um—well—that's the move exactly: you're sick; your friends don't let you see the papers, so you know nothing of them. Officially, the public is

left to forget. In reality, we tell your friends the truth and they spread it. If I were you, I'd tell the truth about King's unfortunate shot that took you in the head. You can call it a rather strange accident, and nobody will believe it was an accident. King must think that no one dares to tell about his hitting you; otherwise he would not urge you to explain your absence. It's too easily explained for his comfort on that basis. Have you any reason for holding it back, John?"

"No; except distaste for promiscuous pity."

"I see; well, you can submit to that now; it's better than the other—distrust and abhorrence—and besides, you'll be well when you get back, and they won't pity you much, with Sue, here—eh?" The Colonel pinched her cheek.

"Oh, father!" remonstrated Miss Thornton.

"By the way, I've got the *Post* in my pocket, Sue: let's see what Frenchy's idea of John's absence from the paper is." He turned to the editorial sheet inside and swiftly glanced down the column. "Well! he *has* turned loose. Read that, John." The Colonel pointed to the headlines: "Knox Grossly Slandered!" and gave the paper to Knox, who read it anxiously, and then passed it to Sue. The editorial ran as follows:

"KNOX GROSSLY SLANDERED!

"The editorial columns of last week's *Orland Sun*

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contained a slur on Mr. Knox, editor of this paper. During Mr. Knox's illness and consequent absence from the office, the undersigned, Jean Baptiste Duval, formerly assistant to Professor Chantillon of the University of Paris, and later a tramp printer and sot, occupies Mr. Knox's post, at his request. The *Orland Sun* is in error. Mr. Knox was not a member of the motor-boat party, but went across the lake on the *John Richmond* for the sole purpose of fishing me, Jean Baptiste Duval, out of the gutter, or from jail. He had reason to suspect that I would arrive at one place or other, because of his experience with me upon former similar occasions. His expectations were fully justified. He searched the slums of three lake towns for me and thus—as the *Orland Sun*, alias Mr. Villiers, alias James Livingstone King (who pulls the wires), states—made passing female acquaintances in his quest for me. I confess his unselfishness is rare: I have only done him some slight favors, perhaps carried out honestly important work for which he paid me, and for this he takes this great interest in me and tries to make of me—a drifting wreck—a man, even as he is. He would even now keep silence, to save my reputation and to save my family embarrassment, and take upon himself the disdain of his friends—such is his kindness. But I, Jean Baptiste Duval, have left some of the manhood of my youth: I cannot permit it. I am the roué. Let the man without blemish

voice the first jeer at Mr. Knox. I, Frenchy, have knowledge: Mr. Knox is the cleanest gentleman I have met in my years of wandering. I cannot say as much for other editors of my acquaintance. In regard to Postmaster King's defense of Mr. Knox: it is not sincere in the slightest detail. Mr. King could easily explain the illness of Mr. Knox. But such an explanation would entail the retirement of Mr. King from society, both good and bad, a retirement which we believe is imminent in any case. Further statements necessary to exonerate Mr. Knox from the *Orland Sun's* cowardly innuendo, I will cheerfully make, even at the risk of involving the personal habits of Mr. Villiers, Mr. King and other interested parties.

"Very truly,

"JEAN BAPTISTE DUVAL,

"Managing Editor (pro tem)."

The two men looked at each other in silence till she had finished. "Frenchy's just splendid!" declared Sue.

"Yes, poor devil, he is: but he is in for a scene with Madame Duval. She'll have a hard time to understand," said Knox.

"I'm glad you're not—*that*—John. I'd simply die in her place."

Madame Duval had come in behind them.

"Gentlemen—my husband, M'sieu Duval, has

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sacrificed his reputation—and mine—to save that of Mr. Knox, his friend. M'sieu Duval was not in a condition to be responsible for his acts on that trip in the launch. Mr. Knox took no thought of his own reputation when he went to save Mr. Duval and me from disgrace. Now, I would have it exactly as my husband has done—he—I——” Madame Duval broke down; Sue went with her from the room, one arm about her: there was nothing to say.

“Evidently she has read the *Post*. Frenchy certainly stood by you, and I'm glad his wife is so good about it. There'll be no end of talk among the women. She won't go out at all. She's a grand woman, too.” The Colonel walked about the room, nervously.

“I'll have to hurry up the doctor, Colonel; I've simply got to get out of here,” said Knox.

“You'll keep still till you're well; that's what *you'll* do,” commanded the Colonel. “The paper is getting along all right. This statement of Frenchy's clears you before the public; the W. and K. road is moving, and by the time we get the tracks laid to the city limits, the council will be all right——”

“What's that? Have you bought the council for the new road, and left Sturtevant out in the cold?” asked Knox, astonished.

“Hardly; no need—except that mayor. He be-

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longs to Sturtevant, body and soul. We've got to get by his veto——"

"Can you do it?" Knox looked anxiously at the Colonel.

"I'm afraid not, unless we steal a march on him——"

"Well, I hope you make it, but you've got a weasel to go against."

"Yes, I know: it's not easy," assented the Colonel, and both men lapsed into a long silence, the Colonel pacing the floor, and Knox—flat on his back in bed—somehow framing his future plans upon the patterns in the ceiling paper.

CHAPTER XXIX

AFTER the maid had removed the tray with the remains of Knox's supper, Frenchy came in.

"See here, Frenchy!" expostulated Knox, "why didn't you consult me before rushing into print with a confession? I could have laid the absence from the office to the true cause—King's golf ball in the back of my head. And the trip across the lake could have been laid to business reasons: for instance, I wanted to borrow two thousand dollars of you to buy all the extra stock of the *Michigan Post*. I actually did borrow it, and the facts in the case certainly would convince any sane business man that I had ample and urgent reason for rushing post haste across the lake after you on the *John Richmond*, and hunting anywhere for you. Both reasons would land hard on King, and he'd have a time to explain things himself, then. But now the mischief is done. You'll have to move away; your wife can't live here now; say nothing of the children. The sooner you get out, the better, too."

"M'sieu knows well that I did the best I could to explain. I did not think of your way out of it: and even then, you say nothing about what you do in the slums while you look for me; but I say, in my

confession—and Madame, *she* say—she is one angel—that I do the most manly thing she know me to do ever—but I must not boast of it; but, you understand, we Frenchmen are born so, to talk of ourselves; and Madame and I—we get along—somehow—she love me—actuellement! I marry her,” Frenchy shrugged his shoulders. “Yes, she is a fine woman, with money, and the office work tire me and I am old—but now—now, I try to be decent—oui, I begin to love her—my wife!” Frenchy paused to give Knox the full effect of such a miracle.

“After all, Frenchy, you are right. I hadn’t thought of such an effect upon you: maybe it will straighten you out,” agreed Knox.

“I don’t know. I tell Madame, she must watch me. I’m just an old man with a devil inside. ’Bout once a month, sometimes not for two, three months, he wake up; then I run wild, oui, like the herd of swine—only I never get drowned, like them.”

“But you’ll move away?” asked Knox.

“Maybe—when you get well. Maybe Madame prefer to stay. Some women prefer to face the scandal. I don’t know what she do.”

“The paper’ll run all right; you better go away now,” insisted Knox.

“That means I must get busy, so the paper miss me when I do go,” chuckled Frenchy.

“You know I didn’t mean that—but——”

“M’sieu Knox surely knows that we have a hard

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fight left yet—this Sturtevant, he gets around that council mighty slick—first we get an alderman against him; then after we turn around twice, the alderman, he turn around once, and he is against us again. Somehow our motions, ordinances, all get lost in a committee. Our reporter, he wait, council-nights, for an ordinance to come up, but the committee reports, oh, yes! and talks of everything else, but our ordinance never comes. So we need to keep up the fight, and I stay—I'm better than a new man, me; Sturtevant might buy a new man—and King, oui, we mus' watch King. So I stay, non?"

"If you feel that way, yes; and I'm coming down next week," declared Knox.

"Saccarre! Non—that you shall not do. Madame nevaire permit!" Frenchy shook his head, full of confidence in Madame Duval's coercive force.

"But I've got to: I can't stay here in bed while everybody else is in the fight. It used to be my fight. Now, I'm of less use than a Chinese god on the shelf—you can pray to him, anyway."

"M'sieu exaggerates the importance of the fight, itself, I thing: a town, some twenty thousand, it have street cars, or it have them not, eh? That is it, non? M'sieu, in his life ambition, does he not look further than this town? Well, one suppose the town fight for itself, now, and M'sieu lie on his back and get well while they do it: who waked the town,

les bourgeois. Is it not, M'sieu? Do they not know it? Does he want their votes, that he may run for mayor, for governor, eh? Will they not rip things up for him now, once he say the word? Oui, I *think* so. Better you lie still, M'sieu, and get strong——”

“But I'm not doing anything, man, can't you understand?” Knox clenched his fists, chafing at the inaction.

“Certainement, yes: better you don't do anything, and spoil it all.”

“But I wasn't after office, or votes; just trying to make a decent living and give them a decent newspaper,” Knox explained. “I hate fraud and graft, and I simply rapped it every time it showed up; that's all.”

“Yes, M'sieu; and we all know it, too. That is why I say, do not spoil it now.”

“You talk as if I were a child, Frenchy. Do you think King's cleek shot knocked all the sincerity and common sense out of me?”

“Who can tell? A blow on the head, back there, may change a tramp to a Doctor of the University—that is not unknown—also educated men have had the wisdom knocked out by a sudden jar. And then, you Americans do a big thing, and then when everybody knows who you are, you do some crazy thing and everybody hoots at you. Better you are put under a guard, once you become famous.”

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“So you want to shut me up till you get a governor’s chair empty for me and then slide me into it? Well, do your best, old man; and I’ll get out some day and make a fool of myself, in spite of you: so look out, you jailer! A fine governor I’d make: I don’t know enough about law to keep me over night, say nothing of running a lot of lawmakers. Besides, I’m not tough enough to make a good politician; and I’ve been through a university, and hope to make millions as a popular novelist, some day, so I can’t qualify, even for a mayor.” Knox laughed at him.

“In my country the savants take interest in politics——”

“Yes, Frenchy, to be sure, and the common people cut off their heads to see how their brains work; it’s commendable, truly, the scientific spirit shown in France.”

“Oui, M’sieu will have his joke—but we take care of him, the future governor, all the same!” and Frenchy made a grand salaam.

CHAPTER XXX

FRENCHY had gone to the post office. Bordman was on the street collecting, and securing advertisements. Back in the boxed-in private office, Hanks, the new city editor, sat under a flaring gas-jet with his heels on the dusty desk; he read and clipped and pasted and scribbled and read, hung between chair and desk like a tilted new moon. You could just make him out from the front of the office. At times the clack of the Gordons and the roll of the air-spring cylinder presses came as a wave through the swinging pressroom door as Mac or Sam kicked it open. The faint smell of fresh ink and benzine and tobacco smoke in the office drew you back into the workrooms where you knew it held forth in full vigor—that is, if you were a printer, as John Knox was.

He sank into his chair at the desk, weak from the effort of walking down to the office. The familiar drawers and pigeon-holes of the desk welcomed him back to business, his business. But he was tired now; he swung his feet up on to the desk-bed and lay back in the tilted chair. It was cheerful in the office; the morning sun streamed slantwise in at the big front windows where the letters, *Michigan Post*, marched backward across the plate-glass field.

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Knox watched through half-closed eyes, the trim rigs and sleek horses and gliding automobiles. Gradually they blurred as his eyes closed in sleep.

Smutty was leaving the office on the jump with Mac's staccato commands still ringing in his ears when he saw Knox, and stopped short, with his mouth wide open. "Mac ought to know; the Old Man's dead to the world; it'd be a shame to wake him!" thought he, and presently returned with Mac, who stood guard over Knox till he should wake.

"Go easy there!" whispered Mac to Frenchy and Bordman coming in together. "Sh-h, he's asleep!"

But the desk telephone-bell rang, and Knox's feet came down, and he was answering.

"Yes, no, Mr. Duval is out, but this is the editor."

"Well, I didn't want the city editor, but I suppose you'll have to do," said the voice in the receiver.

"Who is this?" asked Knox.

"Habberman," said the voice, and continued, "it's a good while since I've heard your voice on the line, but I've got about a month's pay to bet that I'm talking to John Knox, or his ghost; do I keep the money, Knox?"

"About twenty-four hours after you get it, usually," said Knox. "Yes, I got tired of lying in bed——"

"Now, you'll try lying at the office, of course——"

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well, it's all right; the subscribers never believe half you tell them anyway. Say, I just wanted to put you people onto the wreck at Orland—better send Hanks out there on a wheel or something, he might be able to get some pictures, too. They say it's a dandy: coaches smashed to kindling-wood, and started to burn up. Passengers mostly got out alive, but there are about ten killed and fifty injured. Biggest story I've had in a long time. So long!" and Habberman had rung off before Knox could thank him.

Then Knox looked up to greet the others. "Say, Mac, run back and tell Hanks to drive over to Orland and write up the wreck there. Habberman says they've got a terrific smash-up, and he'd better get some pictures from the local photographer, too; they'll help our front page this week."

"But how did you avoid Madame?" scolded Frenchy. "I give directions: you are not to leave the house. Madame, she watch you like a cat—I know—but I don't see how you pass her. What make you such a fool, eh? The walk has done you up, non? You sleep when you come in, and Mac, he is your angel, he guard your sleep; an angel in carpet slippers, six feet two, and a cob pipe to make his halo, eh?"

"He's effective, anyway," maintained Knox. "I don't see the devil anywhere around. I mustn't give my secret away, Frenchy; I'll want to get away

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again sometime, but you're right; I am tired. I had no idea there was so little energy left in me. You can run the office a while longer, old man; you and Bordman. And say, Bordman, come over here and let me look at you——"

Bordman moved nervously into the light by the window where Knox could see him. He knew not what to expect.

"What's happened to you, man?" asked Knox, wonderingly. "Your eyes are clear and bright, and you've straightened up, and your hands don't twitch—been to Keely?"

"Oh! is that all?" sighed Bordman, much relieved. "I—why, you see, Mr. Knox, I thought it wasn't just square for me to get full when I had charge of the cash and the accounts, and you flat on your back and Villiers such a knave with that devil King egging him on. Somebody with brains had to be here. Mac's a printer, a good one and a good fellow, but a printer; Smutty's only a kid, and Frenchy's such a fool that I had to cut out the drinking to keep him straight; I never knew when he'd go on a six-months' spree. He didn't know, either, and if he ever got started, a traction engine couldn't hold him back. You've been good to me, Mr. Knox, and I couldn't go back on you; that's held me, and now I hope I can keep straight. I'd like to actually earn my salary, hereafter."

Frenchy looked at Bordman, while he was speak-

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ing, with a sort of fatherly pride. "Oui, M'sieu Knox, that is it, nearly: Bordman so likely to get full, I've had to watch *him* every minute. Haven't had time to take one drink myself all the time you been sick. Better go back home so we stay sober," and Frenchy smiled at them both.

Knox felt a lump in his throat. He had tried his best to make men out of these reprobates, and failed. But the love they bore him had won them when he was helpless, and his burdens fell upon them, and responsibility braced their weak shoulders. He took Bordman's hand and gripped it with what strength he had. "There's going to be a partnership here some of these days. Frenchy doesn't need it, so you get busy and earn it, Bordman; maybe that'll help you keep straight."

"I'm afraid I haven't got the head for it, sir: but you are very kind," said Bordman, and then suggested: "Now let me get a cab and take you home."

"All right, but first I want to look over the place," and Knox sauntered back through the office. In the pressroom he shook Sam's blackened hand warmly, and noted that new pressmen were on the other machines. Upstairs in the composing-room Mac received him with proper respect, showed the new faces in job type recently added, asked his opinion on several dainty jobs, and then let him look over the composers, all new to him.

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"Where's Smutty?" asked Knox, finally. "Everybody looks new to me."

"I sent him on an errand; ought to be here now, too," said Mac. "He found you asleep in the front office and brought me out there to keep the fellows from waking you up; we didn't think of that confounded telephone bell, or you'd been asleep yet."

"How does it happen that you have so many new hands at work? Been any trouble?" asked Knox again.

"They just naturally shifted: 'comps' get restless, you know," answered Mac, easily, just a shade too easily to suit Knox.

"I saw some new pressmen, too," added Knox, "good men?"

"Pretty good; we manage to get the work out," said Mac, without enthusiasm.

"Villiers in this deal?" suggested Knox.

"Yes." Mac shrugged his shoulders as though Villiers' name ought to explain everything.

"I see." Knox dropped the subject, and with a parting injunction to Mac "to be good," he went back down the stairs to the front office. Mac followed him unnoticed, anxious lest Knox collapse on the way.

At the cab, Knox refused to take Bordman away from the office, merely to see him home, but when Smutty arrived at the curb, breathless through haste to catch and greet the "Old Man," Knox de-

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manded his company, and drew him into the cab beside him.

"Good-bye, Mac; don't pi the forms in my absence," called Smutty to the foreman, as his breath came back, and Mac shook his fist in mock anger at the saucy devil.

The cab moved slowly toward Madame Duval's, but as an after-thought Knox called to the cabby and had him take the lake drive and get back to Duval's in time for dinner. Then Knox and Smutty settled down for a long talk.

"How's the mother, Smutty?" asked Knox.

"Fine. Frenchy's raised my salary, and Ma's pleased. She's mighty good to me, Ma is. Nights, after I'm through working at my algebra——" Smutty's freckled face glowed with loyalty and appreciation.

"When did you start algebra?" broke in Knox.

"Last winter. Ma, she went through high school, you know, and now she's teaching me all she can. She's ambitious for me, Ma is. She reads history to me when I'm too sleepy to care what happens to the *x*'s and *y*'s and *z*'s. And I can sing *amo, amas, amat*, upside down and inside out. Those old Romans must have been a gay old bunch to have so much business doing with that verb *amo*. And I know *bonus, mealier, optimus*, which means dog, butcher, wurst—see?" Smutty looked at Knox from the corner of his eye.

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"No; not exactly," said Knox, solemnly.

But Smutty caught the twinkle in his eye, and returned, "Gwan! you're kiddin' me. Well, Ma, she's trying her best to help me, and she comes in after I'm in bed and sits on the edge, and we talk: say, do you think I'm a fool to tell this to a man? I don't give myself away like this to everybody, you know." Again Smutty watched Knox, ready to retreat into his shell at the first sign of ridicule.

"Your confidence is the highest honor you could pay me," said Knox earnestly.

Smutty's hand found Knox's bigger hand and held it warmly, and he continued: "Well, Ma wants me to be good; join the church, go to prayer-meeting, and all that, you know."

"I thought you did," said Knox; "you go to the meeting with her, don't you, and study the Sunday school lessons and all that?"

"Oh, yes; and then I smoke cigarettes, and drink hard cider and play craps some. None of the meeting stuff goes deep, she says, and sometimes she cries when I tell her how bad I've been." Smutty was deeply disgusted with himself.

"Great Scott! what do you tell her about it for, if you will do what she doesn't want you to do? I didn't ever tell on myself when I was a kid. I'd either quit being tough—if you think you are tough—which I don't admit—or else shut up tight about

it." Knox felt his way back to boyhood. He was touched by Smutty's confidence.

A silence ensued. Knox recalled a lovely tall woman who had kissed him and gone away forever, and he a tiny chap in his first knee trousers. "Yes, Smutty, I had a mother, but she died when I was six years old, and I never gave my confidence to anyone else."

"Not to *her*?" asked Smutty, significantly.

"Oh, yes, to *her*, of course, Smutty." Knox had actually forgotten the existence of Sue, for the minute, but now at Smutty's suggestion the meaning of Sue's care for him came to him strongly; he was to have a home, a *home*!

"I thought so," said Smutty, with an air of conviction based on vast experience. "Dot and I tell each other everything, and so I know you two must."

"Dot?" asked Knox, puzzled; and then he remembered Frenchy's step-daughter.

"Yes, Dot: she'd murder me if she heard me," explained Smutty. "Frenchy's daughter, you know. Well, I suppose it *is* a bad trick to tell on myself, but I bet you'd have trouble to lie to Ma, yourself, with her eyes looking at you. Say, do you know, Mr. Knox, I believe—if there's a God at all—He looks at you through your mother's eyes. So I just tell her what mean tricks I been doin', and she says, 'Why do you do it, John—do you want to

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grow up like Mr. Bordman or Mr. Duval, that they are all talking about?' and I just look foolish, and say I dunno what made me. And she tells me to pray to God to make me a good boy, and when she's gone, I do; 'cause she's all I've got, except Dot and you and Sue—*Sue* is a brick!—and now dad is gone, I'm all she's got to look forward to in her life. But God's got another job on somewhere, I just talk to Him there in the dark of the bedroom, and I get no answer back—nothin'. Nothin' doin' at all to show that He knows a kid is after His help to be good. When I want to stop swearing, He doesn't help worth a damn; so I just made up my mind to quit ringing Him up and play the game alone—maybe the wire is crossed and He ain't to blame, or central may have slipped the plug out by mistake. He's got to *be* there; 'cause Ma's no fool, and He does help *her*, and I know she wouldn't lie about it. It's funny, my telling you all this, Mr. Knox, but it would hurt Ma, and who else is there? Yes, I told Dot about it and she put her arms around my neck and said I was a dear boy and she didn't care what I did—so I cut out the cigarettes and cider for her—it's bum stuff anyway—say, Mr. Knox, what's your idea of a God?" Smutty looked confidently to Knox, expecting him to solve the riddle forthwith.

"Well, the fact is, I don't know that I have a clear idea at all, and I'm afraid I'm not a good one

to tell you about Him, Smutty. You see, I've never tried to talk religion to a boy, and I'm afraid I'll say things I ought not to—" Knox was fighting for time.

"Oh: you're afraid Willie will lose faith in Santa Claus? Don't forget that I've been devil in your office for two years. Those 'comps' and pressmen aren't a bit worried about smashing my God. Now, you're all right—good, I mean—and I want to know how you work your business with God, because I want to get next to Him if it's a possible thing. It can't be that all these church people are crazy."

"No, they aren't. Smutty, suppose you wanted to tell something to a colony of ants, something to make them live better lives and think better thoughts, how would you go at it?" suggested Knox, the way opening clearer for him.

"Oh, I see. You mean that we are the ants, and God has the job of making us listen to Him. Um-hum, yes!" Smutty's face brightened.

"Yes; then don't you see that the only way He can come to us is in our thoughts. He may be giving me thoughts now, to help you understand," continued Knox, sincerely trusting it might be so.

"Oh, and I was expecting something from Him all the time that He couldn't give me because I'm not built right; is that it? And say, do you know, I didn't know myself what I expected Him to do.

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I rather thought He'd work the Samuel racket on me, and yet I never believed that story about God calling him in the dark. I guess he must have called himself in his sleep, like I do sometimes." Smutty fairly beamed now with the satisfaction of understanding.

"Well, you *are* getting the idea, son. You are in just the same fix as the rest of the bunch. They talk to God by themselves and then they get to feeling good and come to prayer-meeting and say God was with them and what a blessing they had! They are telling the truth, mostly; He *was* with them; they thought his thoughts and kept the devil—the evil thoughts—out of them, but you youngsters wonder what God looks like when He's with them, and what His voice sounds like; and there's just enough allegory in the Bible to make you think the angels had feathers on their wings, and so you try and *try* to find God as nobody ever finds Him. I've been there, myself. What you said about playing the game alone, strikes me; the fact is you are doing exactly what God intended you should do, when you put forth all your strength and cut out the bad habits without waiting for Him to come around and remove them: some folks expect to take gas, too, while their sins are being extracted," laughed Knox.

"Thanks, Mr. Knox. I believe I can begin to do business with Him, now. I never did like the idea of lounging up against God—and say, you

don't think a man needs to believe all those old stories, do you? I can do it if there is any sense in it—I'd do a *lot* for Ma—but some of them get on my nerves, sure!" protested Smutty, with the tolerance of a man of the world.

"I suppose it doesn't fit church doctrine," admitted Knox, "but I think it's what you are and do, Smutty, that counts most. A lot of those stories are allegory, some are history, some poetry, and naturally put in figurative language, so the most saintly educated churchman would hardly ask you to believe it all—you've got to work that out for yourself, Smutty; and, say, you don't want to forget that your brain will expand as you grow up, and things you have no knowledge of now will come in to modify your opinions and beliefs—see? Your religion has got to expand along with your brain. If it doesn't; well, you will become blind on some side of your spiritual nature, and may turn into a religious, commercial pirate, running Sabbath Schools with one hand and strangling families with the other."

"That helps a lot, Mr. Knox—shall we sing a doxology?" Smutty smiled at Knox, and he grinned in return, knowing the boy's inability to keep over long at one subject.

CHAPTER XXXI

"WELL, what's happened at the office while I've been gone?" asked Knox, after a pause.

"Oh, plenty. Where'll I begin. I don't know how much they've told you, up in your room. How's your nerves? Can you stand a lot of new stunts all in a bunch?" Smutty looked at Knox, trying to form his own judgment of what Knox could endure.

"I'm all right now, except my legs; they're a bit wobbly. And *they* haven't told me a blessed thing for weeks—oh, yes, that attack on my character in the *Orland Sun*, and King's defense of me, and Frenchy's statement to the public, clearing me."

"That was a fool thing to tell you," said Smutty fiercely, "I got better sense than that, myself. They make me tired. Wouldn't let me come up for fear I'd excite you with my talk, and then they go and tell you *that*." Smutty whistled softly.

"Well, you see, Frenchy hadn't published his confession when they read me the *Orland Sun's* article," Knox explained, "and I suppose they really wanted to find out if I was the tough it says I am. I'm glad you told Miss Thornton about my trip

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across the lake, Smutty; it prepared her for what was coming."

"She might have had a little faith in you," maintained Smutty in disgust. "*I'd* never believe such a story. Well, about the office—you know we had a strike?"

"What's that? Oh! that's the reason we've so many new hands at the office. What about?" asked Knox, intensely.


"Well, you know, Villiers made the whole outfit sore, and they pretty near quit him, but Mac and Sam held them together for you—they'd have gone in a minute if it hadn't been for the prospect of your coming back again. Mac told them you were playing Villiers for a sucker and lettin' him sink his cash in the business, and so they put up with it, even when they got no salary for two weeks, thinkin' you'd pay up when you came back into the office. And when Frenchy set Villiers outside where he belonged, they felt so good they pretty near finished King when he butted in." Smutty chuckled at the thought of King, and unconsciously rubbed his forehead.

"Yes, I heard about it; did you get hurt any?" Knox looked for scars.

"Nothin' much—a few scratches," returned Smutty, with the carelessness of a lineman, and continued, "Well, Frenchy, he paid up the back wages and after they'd sobered up again the office went

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fine. Mac made a mistake, though; he put a new fellow on a case, and he hadn't been there three days before he'd organized a union chapel. Then he come to work one morning with a swelled head from the night before, and got to dumping his stick promiscuous on all the galleys, so the galley-proofs read like grandma's patchwork quilt, crazy—damn crazy—and of course Mac cussed him out. So that noon he called a meetin' of the chapel and demanded an apology from Mac, and Mac apologized; said he was sorry he had ever hired such a drunken cur and specified some of his relatives, and apologized to the chapel for inflicting such a beast upon their society. Then after Mac had gone to dinner the chapel took up again, and after dinner a committee goes to Frenchy and asks him to relieve them from Mac's oppression. A gentleman couldn't keep his self-respect under such treatment as Mac gave them. Frenchy could pick his own foreman, a union man, of course, or they'd ask one out from the city—but Mac must go. He was not acceptable to the union. Well, you know, Mr. Knox, what Frenchy thinks of the union. He told 'em to go plump to hell. Then he called in Mac and Sam and stated the case to them. Mac said, *he'd* better pull out. Strikes cost money, and he wasn't for taking money out of *you* merely because *he* lost his temper. But Sam and Frenchy wouldn't hear to it. 'Do I have to wash my hands and



clean my teeth every time I jack up a bummy press-man?' says Sam. 'Not on your life! Mac's got to run his end of things. If you let him go, they'll stand the next foreman on his head in the corner and raise hell with the composin' room. Give 'em their time. We can get the copy set up in Chicago and print the paper there, too, for a few weeks, if we have to, while we're getting new comps, but Mac stays—Mr. Knox'd never let *him* go.'

" 'I just wanted to know your idea, gentlemen,' says Frenchy. 'Let 'em out, Mac, you're a union man and their foreman. Each one goes when he finish his take, eh? Bordman, he pay 'em?' You know how Frenchy talks, Mr. Knox, quick and jerky. So they fired the whole outfit. I heard afterward that Sturtevant was in the deal; the new man, McGinnis, told of it by mistake when he was full. Well, they threw a few bricks, pied the mailing lists, and smashed the engine up a bit during the strike. I got to know a few cops—they loafed around the office, and kept things from gettin' too lively. McGinnis is in the hospital now—fell into our cellar-hole and broke his leg. He was trying to get into the office at night and got pushed off the second-story ledge; wonder he didn't break his neck. Poor devil! He'll go over the road for it when he gets out, and he's got a wife. After a bit, things quieted down, and now they go smoother. There's no chapel now, but Mac is not satisfied with

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the job-men, a little bit; you can lick a straight-matter man into shape, but a job-man's got to be born that way, same as a painter or a dime-novel writer," explained Smutty.

"Exactly," said Knox, with a smile, "and I slept through it all—on the shelf—well, what next? Say, I'm going to put you on the reportorial staff if you keep on with this style——"

"Well, I'm just getting started: You know Frenchy scared King stiff about his stealing money from letters in the post office, a long while ago. Well——"

"But I didn't know; how did you find out?" asked Knox, curiously.

"Frenchy told me," admitted Smutty. "Well, Frenchy'd told him that you and he—Frenchy, I mean—had definite proof that King was stealing—had it in writing and locked up safe and intended to spring it on him when you got good and ready. Well, King was pretty near batty over that. You know Villiers had had duplicate keys to everything in the outfit made while he was here, and King got 'em—Frenchy'd never thought to change the locks, you know—and one night after the strike was all quieted down and the cops gone and nobody looking for trouble, King lets himself in at the back door and searches every place he can think of in the outfit. He'd got the combination to the safe, too—I don't know where—anyway

he opened it and looked over all the books and papers, particularly the papers, all the time striking matches on the box to read by—he didn't dare to light the gas, or a candle——”

“Were you there, Smutty? Sounds like it,” put in Knox.

“Yes; I was back in the alley with some kids and saw him sneak around to the door, so I went around front, and dropped down the coal-hole, and got in where I could watch—somebody'd forgot to lock the cellar door on the inside. But he didn't get anything, of course; Frenchy was only bluffing him, you know. And then he went over to your room and looked through all your stuff. I don't know what he told the maid, so she'd let him go up; but he didn't get what he wanted. I watched his face when he came out, and he was biting his moustache and swearing to himself. Then he went back to the *Beacon* office and sat a long time in his chair in the front office, thinking; and every now and then he'd pass his hand over his forehead, and shiver. A day or two after that, Frenchy caught him in your room at Frenchy's house, while you were asleep. He was looking through your letters in the bureau drawer. But Frenchy just teased him, and told him the proof was safe—nervy, wasn't he? King, I mean. And pretty soon Villiers comes back to the *Beacon* as city editor, and you know he's no good at anything. Jimmy Kelly, their

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devil, heard Villiers hold King up for cash, and Villiers used to spend Saturday afternoon and Sunday in Chicago and come home looking worse than Bordman—I guess he got into King for a lot of stuff. Did Villiers know about King's stealing, Mr. Knox?" asked Smutty, stopping for breath.

"I don't know; it looks like it. If he'd only be content. King's making seven thousand a year on the square."

"But you can't keep women with that," objected Smutty.

"Then don't you ever try it, son!" advised Knox, and then asked, "What have they done about the trolley—our trolley, I mean—have they kept that from me, too?"

"Nothing much; the track's coming nearer the town on both sides every day, but they haven't got the right of way through town yet—may have to build around it; they got that fixed all right, in case the council holds 'em up."

"That leaves something for me to do, anyway," said Knox, thankfully. "Well, here we are, at home again. You stay in the cab, Smutty, and he'll take you to dinner and surprise your mother."

"You go easy, now, Mr. Knox, till you are strong," advised Smutty, "and coach us from the side lines. Bordman's waked up, and Frenchy's not so bad, either; we can run things a while yet."

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"All right, son, I'll be good; but see what I'm in for!" and Knox nodded toward Madame Duval, standing in the door, and filled to bursting with expostulations on Knox's escape from her prison. Smutty grinned back at Knox, as the cab drove off.

CHAPTER XXXII

At half-past four that same afternoon, Knox lay in the window-seat, at ease. He had made his peace with Madame Duval, eaten everything available, smoked one of Frenchy's cigars, and slept off the dinner and his morning fatigue, and now he felt equal to anything—that is, so long as he lay quiet; when he moved, his legs proved shaky. So he rested content, revelling in the display of color about him; the Navajo blanket, the blue and red and green pillows, his own bright lounging robe, and the waving green maple-leaves outside the window, with the patch of blue sky between. It was warm, but his illness had left him grateful for covering, even in summer weather.

Presently Sue and Colonel Thornton came and sat by him in the window-seat.

"So you broke jail, and had to be captured and brought home in the patrol, with a keeper? I'll have to look out or I'll lose my property——" and she laughed at him; but there was anxiety and reproof in the laugh.

"I couldn't stay here any longer, Sue. I suppose it was foolish—but I'm all right now, and I learned a lot. You've been keeping me in the dark about a lot of things, haven't you?" asked Knox, evading the question of his truancy.

"We had to, dear."

"Yes, I know," assented Knox, and then his mind returned to the traction problem. "It looks bad for us, too; I don't see how the civic federation can possibly win out on the trolley proposition; there's Calkins, the mayor, and Mason, Hardacre and McIntyre in the council—of course they're bought, but what can you do about it without proof? We can put them out of the council next year, but that's too late to do any good." Knox's face clouded, and Colonel Thornton himself seemed to have lost hope.

Knox looked out at the bright day. "Well——" said Miss Thornton, after a pause.

"I was merely thinking of all King's relations to the deal." Knox looked back to Miss Thornton's face with a start, and answered her eyes.

"Villiers wouldn't be able to help, if you squeezed him, would he?" asked the Colonel, suddenly.

"No, I don't think so. King used him, but he never told him anything. If Villiers knew, Frenchy'd have it by this time. Frenchy's been after him hard." Knox looked significantly at the Colonel.

"I see," said he, and sauntered off down stairs to find Madame Duval.

"Never mind, dear; what does it matter? You're getting well, and it really doesn't matter at all, this deal. We've got plenty, you know. The *Post's* yours now—at least you control it—and if it goes

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to smash, I'll have enough for us both." She leaned over quickly and kissed him.

"I know; but you don't want a failure," objected Knox. "A man has his work. It's got to succeed, too—in the end, I mean; I don't count small throw-downs along the way."

"Don't you think a man may be a success, and his work a failure? It seems to me history indicates that," she maintained loyally.

"That's very true, if you take material prosperity as a test of success. I suppose you mean that one may have qualifications out of tune with his environments, and never be able to apply his talents. There's something in it, surely. But I'm in my element as a newspaper man, so it's up to me to get busy and make a go of it. I can't take any sympathy if I fall down, either. Don't you see, girl, you're one reason—the reason—why I can't afford to." Knox set his teeth; he *must* win out.

"Yes, I know,"—she stroked his hair—"but this deal is not the whole game, John; it's a life proposition we're facing. Your effect on the people of this town is in itself a success; they're waking up to right and wrong in the city government. Surely that's worth while."

"Maybe that is to be my success, dear. I don't know but it's bigger than the mere doing of things, to right the thoughts of many men; but I'm going to plug away at this game, anyway. I don't like

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to take a licking." Knox looked anything but whipped, as he lay there in the window-seat. His fierce eyes and clenched hands menaced the thing in his road, whether man or machine.

"Neither do I, my boy, but I'm afraid we're up against it, just the same." Colonel Thornton had come in and answered for Sue. He went on, "Our railroad tried to buy up a controlling interest in Sturtevant's trolley line, and say, what do you think we ran into?"

"No idea, here," said Knox.

"Well, we're bucking the Worthington combination!" The Colonel waited for Knox to appreciate this monstrous fact.

Knox whistled and looked at Sue.

"Why do *they* bother—such a little thing, our town?" asked she.

"The interurban will be made a big system, and there's steady profit in it for no end of years ahead," explained the Colonel.

"We can't buck againt *them*," said Knox, decidedly. "They'll buy out the other road if they want it. The only thing for us is to get the best possible concession from this rival road of theirs now, and when they buy it in, they'll have to work under the franchise that we grant now."

"But they own our mayor and enough of the council now to swing their own franchise. We haven't got a look-in," objected the Colonel.

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"Can't you kidnap the mayor and the bad aldermen and hold them till you pass your franchise?" asked Sue, mindful of shady college politics.

"Thought of that," agreed the Colonel, "but they're too wise; Calkins, the mayor, has dodged at least three fake telegrams calling him away on business, and the aldermen are nervous, too; you can't get near them. Those Worthington agents are onto the game, there's no mistake about *that*! I think they'll swing the council, and give us the laugh—did you know that neither King nor Villiers can get a cent out of them? Sturtevant was overheard telling Villiers that they were not needing any further newspaper commendation at present. That means they have it where they want it."

"But there's some hole to crawl through, yet—they're only human, if they *are* bought, those aldermen," said Knox, determined to keep up his courage.

"Yes; but we've got to find it, that hole; you can't buy them—we're not working that way, anyhow—they'd simply go to the Worthington people and get a raise on the first money, and we'd be sold out, with nothing to show for it. Family influence—no good; church—no good; their finances are all solid; can't find a note or a mortgage of one of them in the market, or we'd squeeze them tight. No lawsuits on, either, and they haven't got a moral laxity in the bunch worth exposure. I can't find a hole anywhere—it's a solid plastered stone wall!"

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The Colonel shook his big fist. "I'm going down stairs for a smoke. I hear you've been running down to the office this morning; don't you try it again, you hear? We've got a carriage and a coachman, too——" He nodded at Sue. "Use that when you want it; there's a 'phone in the house, you know," and he made off down the stairs disregarding the summons to come back; they didn't want him to go, etc. He had been young, and he knew better.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AFTER Miss Thornton and the Colonel had left, Knox dressed for dinner; and then he and Frenchy and Madame Duval and Dot had a jolly time. Frenchy, at his best in the rôle of host, was ably supported by his wife and Dot, whose bright eyes and cheery laugh seconded every *bon mot* of her new father's.

Then they settled in the library over their coffee and watched Frenchy smoke his big meerschaum. Knox was allowed only one cigar, and he had taken that after lunch, so he must be content to look on and criticise the operation. They were listening to Dot at the piano-forte—one of Schubert's masterpieces—when the maid announced, "Mr. Sturtevant; to see Mr. Knox, if possible."

"Not at home," answered Frenchy, for Knox, with a wave of the meerschaum.

"Yes, I am; show him into the parlor, Kate. I'm all right, Mrs. Duval, and I want very much to see Mr. Sturtevant myself. He won't tire me; and he'll not eat me, either," laughed Knox to Frenchy, who was rising in protest. So Knox had his way, and stepped to the parlor.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Knox, but I've something of importance to suggest to you, and I

thought it might save time and trouble for us and for others if you and I could come to an agreement." Sturtevant looked at Knox, trying to read him.

"No trouble, I assure you. Well?" asked Knox, studying Sturtevant.

"You know we are going to build our road through town next spring," began Sturtevant.

"I thought the other road was about done already——" suggested Knox.

"Yes, I know—but I'm talking about our road." Sturtevant gave a slight shrug of impatience.

"Oh, of course, I didn't know you had a right of way," Knox smiled an apology for his ignorance.

"Well, technically, we haven't got it yet. Practically, it's all right," Sturtevant assured him. "Now I know you misunderstood my attitude toward you in the first conversation we had; I mean relative to your handling our advertising matter. All I asked for, was a decent statement of our prospects—you'll admit they are excellent—and that you run our advertising matter, offering our bonds for sale. I don't care to advertise in King's paper—it isn't a responsible sheet, any more—so——"

"Yes, I see," said Knox, quietly. "As it stands, I can't place your advertisement offering bonds for sale; you haven't got the franchise, yet. When you do get it—I'll consider the advertisement. Of course it doesn't need my say-so to convince the

public that any business run by the Worthington Trust will make money—for the Worthingtons. I might give you such an editorial as that, Mr. Sturtevant, for a consideration, of course.”

Knox smiled at Sturtevant, just as frankly as if he, Knox, had not carelessly revealed Sturtevant’s inmost secret—his association with the Worthingtons, and Sturtevant smiled back, good-naturedly indulgent, “That’s a wide shot, Mr. Knox. It’s perfectly possible, I admit, that the Worthington crowd might project a bus-line to the moon; but you or I wouldn’t get an inkling till the first trip had been made, let alone a chance to buy its stocks or bonds. No, Mr. Knox, this is just a little inter-urban trolley-line out to make money, and they want to get their right of way as cheaply as possible—naturally; it costs money to build such a line; and they need to float their bonds. The road will help the town and you’ll help it by helping us.”

“That looks all right; where’s the trouble?” asked Knox, innocently. “I never asserted that interurban traffic was detrimental. Some mistake here; it seems I’m obstructing the march of a great philanthropy—a trolley line. What did I do it for?”

“I’m puzzled to know, myself,” said Sturtevant.

“I simply objected to our giving any railroad company our streets for nothing, on a long-time lease, with no regulation of fare, and no control at

all of the road. And when it became evident to me that you, for your road, had corrupted every man in sight who was of use to you, I thought it about time to open up your workings to the public. You must feel good; King and Villiers will be ground up in your mill, before you're through, too, and——" Knox's bitter indignation was interrupted by Sturtevant.

"I don't wish to add yourself as a third victim, Mr. Knox," said he; "that's why I'm here. Believe me, King's assault upon you had no suggestion from me, or my company. We do not use such methods——"

"I see," agreed Knox, sarcastically, "they'd involve you in criminal suits; a poor business policy, I'll admit, to incur suits. But on the other count, the corruption of citizens?"

"I am not aware that such a charge is well founded, Mr. Knox," returned Sturtevant. "If I may advise you, I'd not make that as a statement to the public. It might subject the *Michigan Post* to suits, and you know that we are not weak financially, if we *are* just starting."

"Your offer to me for my advertising space and editorial; also your purchase of Mr. Duval for one hundred and fifty dollars? What about that? Don't you call that an attempt at corruption?"

"Pure business," Sturtevant smiled easily. "I paid for a notice in the case of Mr. Duval; and was

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refused the chance to pay you for it in the first case. Is that all, Mr. Knox?"

"Everything tangible, yes. But suppose I had written evidence." Knox watched Sturtevant closely.

Sturtevant still smiled, secure in his power, but suddenly he started as a new possibility crossed his brain, and then again his self-confidence and poise returned.

"Well, when we get the right of way, I'll see you about the advertising, Mr. Knox," suggested Sturtevant, still playing to get his own way with Knox.

"So soon as that?" asked Knox, curiously.

"Three weeks from Tuesday; and now I'll say good-night. I hope your recovery will be speedy, Mr. Knox." Sturtevant held out his hand, but Knox failed to see it.

"I'm getting along beautifully," laughed Knox. "Oh, by the way—how's your friend, McGinnis?"

"McGinnis?" asked Sturtevant, blankly.

"Yes; he fell from the second story of our office while I've been laid up here. I understood he forgot his pipe or some other article dear to his heart, and climbed back to get it. They tell me that Smutty handed it out to him a trifle too fast and McGinnis fell and broke his leg. It's too bad—all his wages and the hospital bills and the doctor—it'll cost you a lot, won't it?"

"Really, Mr. Knox, you speak in riddles," per-



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sisted Sturtevant, "I don't know the man. If you think I'd set a burglar at your office, you've misjudged me greatly."

"Well, it may be that McGinnis was a fool; or just taking the air by climbing up our building by the rainspout. I'll see you again, anyway—when you get the franchise. Good night." Knox said it so cheerfully that Sturtevant started, wondering what hidden resources Knox might have. Then he suggested, "Good night; three weeks from Tuesday," and was off.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"WELL, what does he want, now?" asked Frenchy when Knox returned to the sitting-room. Madame Duval and Dot had gone upstairs, so the men could speak freely.

"Same old story. I jollied him along a bit about McGinnis and the strike, and Sturtevant's own part in it. Told him I knew who was behind him, too; and he denied it. But he'll do some worrying yet. He wanted me to advertise the shares in the trolley company. I offered to—when he got the right of way! And he claims they have it cinched for three weeks from next Tuesday——" Knox stopped as the door-bell rang, and both men listened for the voice of the visitor, but failed to recognize it. The maid announced, "Mr. Sawtell to see Mr. Knox." This time Knox gave Frenchy no chance to protest against his seeing the caller.

"You go on down to the club, Frenchy," he suggested. "I want Sawtell all to myself here in the sitting-room where it's cosy. Get some cigars, your best ones. I mean to make the old fellow happy and maybe he'll be able to help us. I think this call means a lot. Hustle now, get things ready and

then off with you to the club. Nervy, to chase a man out of his own house, but you get a move on, all the same."

"Oui, yes! I fix it. Sawtell's got lots of power; maybe he can help, the boss. So long, M'sieu l'Editeur!" and Frenchy went to get his cigars.

After Knox and Sawtell had passed commonplace greetings, and Knox had installed the old man in the big leather chair with a cigar well under way, Sawtell got down to business.

"Well, Knox," said he, "what do you think of my proposition? You've had time to consider it since last I saw you."

"I'm ready to go in with you, Mr. Sawtell. If you can change your personal platform so as to represent the vital interests of the state, you'll find the solid men with you throughout our state. Of course, you know, you haven't always been outspoken as to your position regarding some of the acknowledged abuses which have crept into the machine in this county; and as you were the boss of that machine, you see——"

"Yes, I've thought of that—say, did you ever hear Francis Murphy?"

"Yes."

"Well, nobody ever objected to his campaigning against liquor merely because he had been reclaimed from under its sway."

"To be sure, but is the case parallel?"

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"Oh, I see; you think he might have preached a great temperance sermon while under the influence of liquor, but its convincing power would suffer if the audience realized its source?"

Knox nodded assent.

"And you mean that I'm an old reprobate posing as a reform candidate, but all the time keeping my seat on the little machine rodent of this county, as a convenient stepping-up place for me to rise from onto the state machine baby elephant. And you wish to know how the voters can be sure that I am in earnest as to my railroad and trust reforms; and how they can place confidence in my ability to push them through if they elect me? That's a nasty problem. I've thought about it a lot. Say, Knox, how do you regard me? Am I a tough, an unprincipled parasite sucking the life of the body politic? Honest, now, how *have* you been accustomed to think of me yourself? I don't count your editorials; every fellow has to roast the county boss; that's the first thing taught to the printer's devil—after type-lice—so that goes for nothing. What do *you* think of me?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Sawtell, I am figuring on striking you for help in a deal I have to carry through, and I don't wish to strain your kindly feeling toward me, so—I'd rather not go into that, and besides, I really like you personally."

"Oh! So you actually believed your own editor-



ials? And I'm a liar and a thief and a sewer-grafter, and a howling disgrace to our wonderful civilization. Sure! I know it all by heart, but what can I do to help you, my virtuous friend?" There was a twinkle in Sawtell's eye, and a jolly roll to his assumed brogue which told Knox that the old fellow was not offended.

"It's like this," explained Knox. "I'm committed to this civic federation movement against the trolley-road franchise. It's rotten from start to finish, their deal with the council—but you know all about *that*. You know Mr. Sturtevant?"

"Do I know him? Sure I do!"

"Well, he told me that his road would have their franchise three weeks from Tuesday. He was dead sure of it. He's bought the council, of course."

"Where do I come in?" interrupted Sawtell.

"You just naturally call off your aldermen and spank the mayor; then they'll turn down Sturtevant and his road, and I'll stump the state for you, if I have to sacrifice all this summer's golf to do it. *And* the Civic Federation of this city will give a tip to the best people in the cities and villages throughout the state, and your boom for senator will get an echo to make brother Hawthorne, your rival, sit up and stare and hustle to salt down his plurality."

"Looks good," observed Sawtell, and blew smoke rings through each other.

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"You can handle Hardacre and Mason and Calkins?" asked Knox.

"Yes."

"Will you have to make good to them their money loss? They'll have to refund to Sturtevant, you know, if they vote against him."

"No, not exactly. I'll send them to the penitentiary if they refuse to obey me. That's considerably cheaper."

"How can I be sure of this?" asked Knox, anxiously.

"How can I be sure you'll use your influence for me?" returned Sawtell.

"For the same reason that every man who learns that our civic federation backs you—and why—will vote for you."

"That's reasonable enough. On my part, I'll give you documentary evidence sufficient to send all three of these honorable city fathers up for years, and throw in Sturtevant for good measure. Will that suit you?"

Knox smiled and gripped Sawtell's hand. "You don't know how big a load you've lifted from me."

"When you've got the evidence in your own hands, you mean—of course you don't trust a grafter like me——"

"Well, of course, the actual papers in hand would help, you know—and—don't rub it in about my stating my opinion of you! You don't invari-



ably stick to the entire truth, do you, Mr. Sawtell?"

"About as well as other folks, I guess; but I'll get those papers to you to-morrow morning myself. Say, Knox, did you ever hear of the suggestion, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'? There's always two sides to a situation with two parties in it. Now, I was thinkin' maybe you hadn't heard or seen the other side."


"I'm all ears; let's hear your other side. Really I'd like very much to know how you look at things, Mr. Sawtell, you are so much older than I am, and certainly experienced in the political game."

"I hardly know how to start it——" The old man cleared his throat. "But you see most political fights have a lot of justice and a lot of injustice pretty evenly divided up among the different gangs. Even the reform candidate and his crowd have glaring defects and wrong-doing to their credit before the campaign is over—but all this doesn't cut any figure in sewer-grafting and trolley-franchises and city gas and such-like steals. That business is generally dirty. Yes, I say, *generally*; because, don't you see, if I get next to the fact that there will be a big rise in gas company stock owing to the action of the city council, I'm more than likely to buy in early; and if they pay me good dividends I'll hold on—ten or fifteen per cent. is no joke. So if I buy my gas stock, you

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can't say they bribed me, and you see the men in our family weren't raised in a convent, so it's likely I'll go right on thinking I'm just as good a Christian as the next man, in spite of my fifteen per cent. dividends which help to send our minister to Europe on his vacation.

"Now you'll find that most good political science men prefer a system of parties under our peculiar style of misgovernment. And my taste runs along with theirs. Furthermore and moreover, they mention the possibility of a chairman of the party organizations in their text books. And I rather dislike the idea of such learned men being left high and dry on their own theories, so I turn my attention to handling my fellow creatures and become a boss. Now my fellow creatures, being all honest men and justly indignant at the bad 'politicians' who are running the government, and getting all the good places for their 'creatures' naturally look with favor upon getting a few worthy men into office. And here is my chance. In general most of their desires are clean, but they don't know just how to satisfy them, so I convince several that *I* am the worthy man and if they'll help me up, I'll pull them up after me. And so I get my start. Now, of course I can't make the whole political machine in my neighborhood over for them in a minute. I do the best I can, and of course to be effective I must hold my job and keep my grip on their confidence.



Thus I get the habit of being re-elected, or re-appointed. And to become still more effective, I go after higher things, and finally I find out from experience that the men I started with are not to be depended on, and some are knaves, and some affirm that *I'm* a rascal. And in some things I *have* done a shade less well than my inside monitor approves of; but I had to go on, I was launched in politics. After a while I rather expected a colleague to turn on me any minute, and I grew more careful in my statements. Men tried to pump me for their own selfish purposes and failed, and very naturally called me a liar. Well, I didn't tell them the truth; but I'd have lost my job and my reputation if I'd given it to them, but I wasn't a fool. So there you are. I never gave a bribe myself, thought I couldn't swear that my men have never done so. I've stolen most things in small quantities, from farmer Kent's green apples when I was a kid, to souvenir spoons from Atlantic City last year. And I've sold out my colleague for a nomination, *after* I found that he had arranged a little private sale of himself to another candidate, and I've been blackguarded for it. But I've got a whole lot of self-respect left, and I'm neither a highwayman nor a fugitive. I'll reform a lot of things, if I get the chance, but it's got to come slow. That's my other side, Knox. A trifle disjointed, as an old man's cackle is likely to be; but that's it."

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Knox sat in silence while Sawtell smoked fast and chewed his cigar, evidently fighting his battles over again to himself. Finally, Knox ventured, "I had to judge by appearances, Mr. Sawtell, in writing my editorials. I'd do it over again the same way, I suppose, because you certainly handled the lower element of our city in your machine; and they stood for ideals repulsive to the rest of us with better education——"

"Yes, of course; you see, I took the human material that came to my hand. I couldn't have touched your better-class man. In the first place he wouldn't get me the votes at all. Politics is low? Why, what else could it be with no tariff on immigration and a majority rule, and a lax naturalization with no decent educational requirements, *and* child labor? A nice moral animal of dainty refined tastes you'll get that way; he's your politics."

"And now?" asked Knox.

"Now, I own thousands of him, and I can swing him in a mass for the better interests, if they'll be decent about it and not shut him off from his simple rights. Remember, *he's* your majority, even if he isn't up to grade. If you're going to help me, Knox, the first thing you'll have to do is, get well acquainted with my majority, and put your Civic Federation wise to the fact that he's human, my majority, if he is dirty politics. Well, I must be going. You're not strong yet, and you ought to

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be in bed." Sawtell threw his cigar stub into the empty grate and rose.

"I'm fit; don't hurry. I'm just getting interested——"

"Yes, it *is* interesting, but you can meet *him* later. I really must go. I'll get those papers to you the first thing to-morrow morning. So *that's* settled. What did you do with my hat? Oh, all right. Good night, Knox, take it easy and don't worry too much over this council deal. It's a sure thing now, mark my word." Sawtell shook Knox's hand warmly and left him standing in the front doorway.

CHAPTER XXXV

AFTER all the clerks save the stamp-window girl and the registered letter man had gone to lunch, Carter went back into Postmaster King's office and shut the door.

"Well?" inquired King.

"I missed my cash deposit in Detroit last Saturday, and I saw a Mexican dog with a new collar on its neck, there, too. And I wondered what I'd done to merit such a slight. Now, I need a new collar myself, if I don't need the mistress."

"Sit down, Carter," suggested King quietly.

"Eh?" sneered Carter. But he took the desk-chair opposite King at the flat-topped desk.

"Now write as I dictate."

Carter dipped a pen and squared a letter-head before him.

"Mr. J. L. King, Postmaster, Waukesa, Mich.:
Dear Sir—Herewith I tender my resignation from the U. S. postal service, to take effect immediately."

Carter laughed: "What are you driving at, King? You know I've got you pinched."

King persisted coldly, "I want you to write that at once and sign it. I don't care to be forced to let you go with a 'for the good of the service' or a

dishonorable discharge. You get out instantly. It's up to you, *how*."

"Sawtell will turn you down flat, if——"

"Sawtell is behind it," answered King, smiling. "He's disgusted with your free attentions to the postal clerks. Sawtell is a highly moral man, you know."

Carter's heart stood still—and then beat furiously. "You don't really mean it, Mr. King?" he whined.

"I am perfectly serious. I'm tired of your airs and of your petty attempts to scare me out of my skin. You've had the notion that I was rifling the mails, haven't you? Well, the exact truth is that I've been laying for an important political deal. I have opened some letters to get it, and I *have* gotten it. I didn't take a cent of anybody's money, and if you ever open your head about the matter, I'll make you prove your words, or send you up for it. It's your word against mine, and I'm not afraid. Regarding the dog and the woman: I must confess that I've had my infatuations, but mind you, I've paid hard cash every time, and not gotten engaged to a girl simply to gratify my liking for womankind at the cost of a few paste diamonds. On the square, Carter, how many girls are you engaged to at this minute, and what discount do you get on paste diamonds by the dozen?"

Carter was slowly tracing his resignation. Fi-

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nally he signed it and flicked it over to King. "There, you woman-charmer! I'm out. But I'll live to see you in—in for a good long term behind the bars, till you feel like a clerk in the stamp-window. God knows I'm no saint, but I'm not in your class, not even your Sunday school class! So long, King. I'll see you again in the docket." Carter lounged out of the office, cleaned out his private desk and took his effects home to his room. That whole afternoon he spent in a luxurious debauch at the government expense, and an inspector of post offices paid the barkeeper.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THREE weeks later, on Tuesday evening, Knox sat in the rear of the council-chamber, listening to the discussion, and waiting till they should vote upon the interurban railway franchise. Smutty whispered irreverent comments upon the city fathers, as the spirit moved him; their gestures, attire, grammar, or lack of it; and especially their morals, public and private, suffered at his hands.

Frenchy had stepped over to the office of the *Michigan Post* on an errand for Knox. Villiers was intently taking notes for his paper. Over in the back left-hand corner, Sue and Colonel Thornton followed the speaker—Hardacre, Sturtevant's man—impatiently. Sturtevant himself smoked, and occasionally tapped nervously on the floor with his shoe-tip, evidently much bored and wishing they'd vote and get through with it: he had them, owned them, the majority; so where was the use in all this fuss—especially as Hardacre never clinched anything in his talk?

Sue looked at Knox; he was playing a good losing game, she thought. Presently the speaker stopped and sat down. Calkins, the mayor, ordered a roll-call, before anyone could take the floor. One after another the aldermen voted, "Yes" or "No,"

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and then it was all over. Sturtevant had won; the trolley line was to have free use of the city streets during the next ninety-nine years! With a smile at Knox, Calkins, the mayor, announced the result, and then turned to read a note which Smutty was holding out to him—a note from Knox.


The mayor's face betrayed nothing, but Sue thought she saw a catch in his breath, and a slight set of the jaw. Aldermen Hardacre and Mason were reading similar notes. She wondered what it meant. So did Sturtevant. Colonel Thornton turned to leave just as Mayor Calkins suggested, "Gentlemen, a motion to reconsider is in order."

"Come on, Knox," said the Colonel, "it's over, and we're beaten—why stay here to see them clinch it with a reconsideration?"

"Wait; we may need your vote. Sh-h—listen to the roll-call," advised Knox.

So the Colonel waited, wondering what interest Knox could possibly have in a lost proposition like that. But after the motion to reconsider had passed, and the clerk began to take their vote on the original motion—to allow the franchise—the Colonel woke up. Hardacre had voted "No!"

Sturtevant stared at him and at Knox, dumb with amazement—a cold chill began to creep over Sturtevant. The aldermen voted one by one, exactly as in the first roll-call, till Mason's name was reached. He answered low, a "No."



Sue felt that something was afoot; Knox's hand was showing, but she couldn't understand his hold on the aldermen, Mason and Hardacre. Neither could Sturtevant, nor the Colonel, nor the rest. Two of Sturtevant's strongest men had turned against him at the last moment.

Mason's name was the last of the sold-out aldermen, too, and when Colonel Thornton and the rest had voted, this left the council tied on the reconsidered franchise; and now the mayor must decide it.

Half a minute passed, and still he did not answer the clerk's call of his name. "Calk-ins," came from a great distance, crept up on him and then boomed in his ear, "CALK-INS!" like a big gun. He thought of all his obligations to Sturtevant, and winced; and then he thought of John Knox. He saw himself, Calkins—would that crowd never stop staring at him?—in a cell. Mechanically he passed his hand over his head to feel if it were really shaven; no—the picture was only a picture; his thick black curling hair was still in place. Then he saw his wife and children, and in want——.

Meanwhile Sturtevant smiled easily. He knew Calkins—owned him body and soul, and beamed encouragement to him, to aid him at this moment of public betrayal.

Sue looked at Knox. He, too, seemed confident, and nodded pleasantly to Frenchy, who had just appeared in the doorway. Suddenly Colonel Thorn-

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ton, ignorant of Knox's game and unable to endure the tension, sprang up and shook his fist at the hesitating mayor. Pointing to Sturtevant, the Colonel motioned to the mayor, to have done with that gentleman, or——

"No!" voted the mayor, and leaned back in his chair, worn out by the nervous strain.


"Move we adjourn!" called the Colonel, but nobody heard the mayor put the motion amid the general scramble to get at Knox. Frenchy was shaking him by the hand; and when Frenchy had celebrated with his Gallic thoroughness, the aldermen of the civic federation party congratulated Knox warmly, wonder at this sudden turn still dominating them, but their questions reserved for a more private occasion, while Sue watched his triumph, bursting to know the secret.

Over at the left of the interested group, Mr. Sturtevant, awaiting an opportunity to see the mayor alone and call him to account, was subjected to an unwelcome interview: "Is this Mr. Sturtevant?" asked the officer.

"Yes; what can I do for you?" answered Sturtevant.

"I have a warrant for your arrest," said he. "It will be better to make no scene here, sir."

"Certainly, I'll go with you, of course. But what is the charge?" asked Sturtevant, coolly.



"Bribery; it's quite regular, the warrant; a grand jury indictment behind it, sir," explained the officer.

"Oh, I see: go on, I'll follow you." Sturtevant scowled at Knox, set his teeth hard together, and went out into the night.

In the hallway leading from the council chamber into the street Postmaster King met an old friend of his, the post office inspector. King poured out to him his hard luck story of the lost trolley franchise, and the worthless stock and useless real estate options left on his hands. And the inspector agreed that it was a hard thing to bear, and borrowed a chew of tobacco from King on the strength of his sympathy. Presently they came to the police station.

"I've got to speak to the desk-sergeant about a fellow on the road between here and Detroit. I'm going on down to the Michigan Central afterwards—you go that way, don't you? Will you come in and wait? I may be some time about it. Possibly I won't see you again for a while." So they went together up the broad steps and into the waiting-room. King settled himself for a smoke, and forgot the inspector in his wonder at Knox's sudden victory, and his attempt to fathom it.

The inspector and the desk-sergeant and big Policeman Dougal stood about him, as the inspector suggested, "Come over to the desk and sign. We'll

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take care of your valuables, knife, etc. You can keep your watch and small change for the present. I suppose you'll be wanting to retire; it's getting late."

"What fool business in this, Tom?" asked King, turning pale.

"You are under arrest for opening the mail," answered the desk-sergeant for him.

"Is this your doing, Tom? It's a poor joke, you know."

"Dead serious, King," returned the inspector. "Clearest case I've been on for a long while. You're the only fellow on the route that uses fine-cut tobacco. We found it in the gum of the envelopes that had been opened, rifled and re-sealed. They do some great stunts with a microscope these days, you know. I'm sorry you couldn't keep straight, but I can't help it; this part of it is my work, you know."

"I suppose so. Well, I may as well get some sleep, so I can clear up this blunder of yours in the morning, Tom."

King kept his head until they locked him in his cell, and then he went to pieces in a frightful way.

CHAPTER XXXVII

As they walked home from the council meeting, Knox had ample opportunity to explain to Miss Thornton and the Colonel how he had procured the downfall of Sturtevant and the votes of the aldermen. But of course he suppressed Mr. Sawtell's part in the game.

"That's a narrow margin, Mr. Knox," said the Colonel. "I hope we'll have more leeway in the next deal. I'd given up hope long ago. Good-night—you'll excuse me, I know; you young folks don't want me around now. I'll see you at the office in the morning." He went into the house, leaving Knox and Miss Thornton on the verandah; and then he left by the back door to meet the other square aldermen down town.

"Well, are you satisfied now, you conqueror?" asked Miss Thornton. "You've gotten everything in sight, haven't you? The *Post's* yours again; you've whipped the trolley, and do you know, I heard—that is, Mrs. Johnson said that Katherine—her niece, you know—got it straight from Chester Davis—he goes with her, you know—well, Chester said he heard that Lawyer Brown had seen a letter to Alderman Holderness from whoever appoints the Postmaster, giving the place to you! Postmaster

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Knox. Now you can hold up King's paper, can't you? But you won't, I know. Please keep Dinah in the post office. Carter treated her shamefully. If you swell up with importance like Mr. King, I'll take it out of you. You have gotten everything, haven't you?"

"No! I want *you*. When?"

"It'll take you about a week to get this fight cleaned up, even if it ~~is~~ won; and I'll need at least that long to compose my mind: it's an awful proposition to marry a man, even if he does happen to be you. It's leaving yourself on one side of the ceremony, and you don't know what kind of a self you'll find on the other side. Did you ever think what a gap there is between the married woman and the girl? No? Well, you'll have plenty of time to find out the difference when you've lost the girl, and got the wife. But it'll be only *me*, and I am going to be happy with you, dear, and——"

But John Knox asserted his prerogative, and her speech ceased.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AFTER he left Colonel Thornton's, they captured him and carried him off to the office of the *Michigan Post*, where two black caterers from the Palace Restaurant had just put the finishing touches on the folding-tables, spread for a banquet. Holderness presided, and at the far end, Cornwall, the city attorney, faced him, beaming with satisfaction at the rout of the trolley company. Alderman Jackson and Colonel Thornton had Smutty between them, and then came Bordman and Sam, the pressman; on the other side Frenchy and Habberman, the reporter for the *Mail*, and Hanks, the new city editor, and Mac, the foreman, alternated with loyal city fathers of the civic federation; and at Holderness' right sat the guest of honor, John Knox.

After the third course had disappeared, and everybody rested, waiting for the ice-cream, Alderman Holderness addressed the company. They had gathered to do honor to one who had long fought a losing fight, and at the last, when the whole city had taken up his cause—which really was its own—and failed, he had turned defeat into victory, and now he would tell them how it was done.

Knox deprecated the flattery of his friend, Al-

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derman Holderness; still he was greatly pleased with the result of the vote just taken in the city council chamber. It was true he was partly to blame for the reversal of the vote; the reason for his influence with certain aldermen was due to documents having their signatures. These papers had come to him in a perfectly regular private deal, and their nature must be conjectured, because the vote of these aldermen had been given to Knox upon his personal assurance that the embarrassing papers should be delivered into their hands. Mr. Sturtevant himself was partly responsible for Knox's following up the idea, for Mr. Sturtevant had called upon Knox some weeks ago, and in answer to Knox's question, let slip the hint as to King's and his own intimate relations with the city council. That was all—except that evidence of Sturtevant's bribery had likewise been found, and the grand jury had taken action upon it, and Sturtevant was now safe in the city jail. Then Knox sat down.

"Gee! but that's slick," said Smutty under his breath. There was silence just then, and everybody heard him, and everybody laughed—and Smutty blushed.

"I agree with Mr. Finnerty," maintained Colonel Thornton, pinching Smutty's ear.

"So say we all of us!" echoed Holderness from the head of the table. "And now, gentlemen, it's growing late. Mr. John Finnerty, alias Smutty,

ought to be in bed, and I know what dreams he'll have when he gets there—with this supper in him. And another John, named Knox, isn't solid on his legs yet, and we've got no business to kill him off, so we'll send him home, too. But, as a loyal Republican, with all due honors of war to the Democrats here, I wish to add a Republican blessing: It comes at a most fortunate time, and I am proud to be the first to greet our new federal official, Postmaster Knox." He bowed to Knox and handed him the envelope containing his appointment.

After the cheering, Knox thanked them and voiced his appreciation of their confidence: he had not sought the office; indeed he had not heard of its vacancy, but he would do his best to secure efficient service for the town, and in closing, he wished to express his lasting gratitude to the loyal friends who had kept up his business and his fight while he was out of the game, especially to Madame and M'sieu Duval, to "Mac," to "Smutty," to Sam, and to Mr. Bordman.

"What I tell you, Holderness?" said Frenchy, after they had dropped Knox at his rooms and Frenchy was carrying Holderness home in his "auto," "M'sieu Knox, he's good for the governor's job; you wait."

"That's a long ways ahead, Frenchy; Knox is a young man—but he may get there some day.

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There's no such thing as putting limits to a reform candidate, once he gets before the people. So long, Frenchy. I'll see you at the wedding," and Holder-ness stepped out at his door.

"Oui! I *thing* so!" Frenchy lapsed into contemplation of Knox's future greatness, while his huge machine bored its searchlights deep into the night.

THE END

